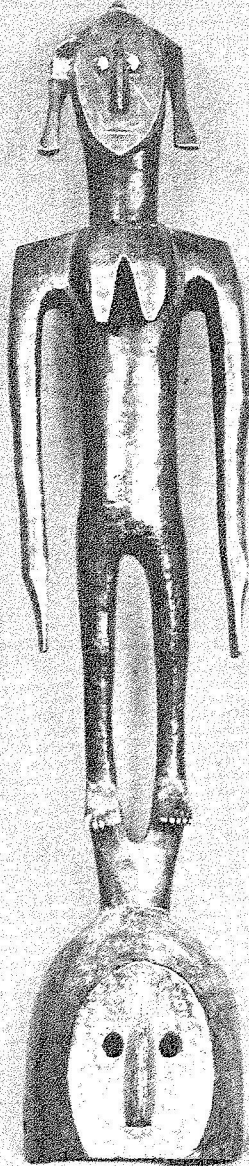


AUGUST 1975

MUNGER AFRICANA LIBRARY NOTES



OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE

OCT 13 1975

LIBRARY

31

FEMALE POWER IN AFRICAN POLITICS:
THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SIERRA LEONE
Dr. Filomina Steady

Munger Africana Library Notes are eclectic within the field of Africana.

Issues are generated from seminars by distinguished visitors, reports of current field research, unpublished historical manuscripts, and other material deemed useful to Africanists. Large color photographs of African art objects or of subjects illustrative of the text are a feature of most issues.

The Editorial Board is drawn from Africanists at the Institute who have published research on African topics:

Robert Bates (PhD MIT) Political Science
Margaret Rouse Bates (PhD Harvard) Political Science
Robert Dilworth (PhD Caltech) Mathematics
Robert Huttenback (PhD UCLA) History
Edwin Munger (PhD Chicago) Political Geography
Roger Noll (PhD Harvard) Economics
Robert Oliver (PhD Princeton) Economics
Thayer Scudder (PhD Harvard) Anthropology

Viewpoints expressed in these Notes are solely the responsibility of the individual authors and may or may not have the concurrence of the editorial board.

Editorial Consultant: Wilma Fairchild (MA Clark) Geography
Photographic Consultant: Floyd Clark
Librarian: Charlene Baldwin (MA Chicago)
Business Manager: Barbara McMahon
Circulation Manager: Joy Hays

Subscriptions: \$10 a volume. Prices of individual issues vary, but the total cost of a year's issues is always in excess of the \$10 subscription price.

Business and editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

Munger Africana Library
California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California 91125 U.S.A.

MUNGER AFRICANA LIBRARY NOTES

Four Dollars

Issue #31

August 1975

FEMALE POWER IN AFRICAN POLITICS:
THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SIERRA LEONE

Filomina Chioma Steady

Cover: Mossi Mask. Wood with cowrie shell eyes.
Yatenga District, Upper Volta. Height, 45 inches.

© 1975 California Institute of Technology

Introduction

Dr. Filomina Steady is an anthropologist who has selected a political subject for her research: the governing party in Sierra Leone.

As an anthropologist, Dr. Steady possesses a fine eye for nuance and detail. The tone and gesture of public speech, the manner and style of political leadership, and the quality and meaning of patterns of social action--these features of organizational politics receive central attention in her work. The detail with which she reproduces what was done and said make her study a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the internal workings of a political party. Indeed, it can be contended that the ancillary bodies of African political parties--the youth wings, women's leagues, etc.--have thus far formed a terra incognita for those interested in African politics. This hiatus in our knowledge makes Dr. Steady's work a particularly welcome contribution.

Nonetheless, to a political scientist at least, various shortcomings will be apparent. They deserve comment only because they are representative of the differences between a sociological approach to political organization, as taken by Dr. Steady, and the approach that would be taken by most political scientists. Basically there is the problem of cause and effect. To what degree, for example, does the women's league have an independent effect on policy and to what degree is it merely a creation of those already committed to a policy position? My suspicion (and it would be a suspicion in the minds of most political scientists) is that the latter is more characteristic of the status of ancillary organizations in Africa; that most tend to be dominated by central elites. Whichever is the case, the question of the direction of causality must be resolved in order to justify the amount of attention given to this organization by Dr. Steady, who assumes at the outset the organization's autonomy and significance.

Secondly, political scientists would insist that the basic purpose of parties is to contest elections. The sociological literature, such as this piece by Dr. Steady, gives equal weight to other purposes and dwells at length on the non-electoral role of political organizations. While I find the accounts contained in this work fascinating, nonetheless I would have preferred more insight into the activities of the women's league during elections, both at the national and municipal levels--the latter being particularly important to this organization.

Lastly, in reading this piece, I felt the need for more contextual analysis. Sierra Leone is one of the few countries where national

government has been displaced in an election, despite the attempts of military factions to forestall the transition. Rival parties continued to function during the period in which Dr. Steady conducted her research. Expectations had been formed of the public sector by those possessing a variety of social, cultural, and economic interests, and these expectations had clearly led to shifting patterns of political allegiance. In the center was the All People's Congress (APC) and its women's organization. As a political scientist, I would have appreciated less emphasis on a perspective that looked from the APC out; as taken by Dr. Steady, and more of an emphasis on the environment of the organization, the political forces operating therein and the consequences for the way people behave within the APC.



Dr. Steady was born in Freetown. She attended Smith College, Boston University, and in 1973, took her D.Phil. at Oxford. She has been on the faculties of the University of Sierra Leone, Yale, and Boston.

But then these objections are based upon the differences that arise between disciplines. And it is the sheer variety of disciplines that address the phenomenon of African politics that makes the subject so attractive. Dr. Steady has given us one of the first detailed, internal accounts of the operations of an ancillary organization in a governing party in Africa, and this represents a very real contribution. Persons from other disciplines, such as myself, are free to judge this contribution from their particular perspective. But we all will acknowledge the importance of Dr. Steady's subject and the quality of her research.

R. H. B.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	. 1
Acknowledgments . . . . .	. 3
I. The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women . . . . .	. 5
Nancy Steele. . . . .	. 5
Autonomy and Female Power . . . . .	. 8
Leadership Structure . . . . .	. 11
A. The Executive . . . . .	. 11
B. The Working Committee . . . . .	. 13
C. The Nucleus of Leadership . . . . .	. 19
Decision-Making . . . . .	. 20
A. Influence of Mrs. Steele . . . . .	. 20
B. Reduction of Tensions . . . . .	. 20
C. Collective Decisions . . . . .	. 22
Membership . . . . .	. 22
The Branch . . . . .	. 27
A. Article 5. The Branch - The Basic Party Organization . . . . .	. 27
B. The Sociological Significance of Branch Meetings . . . . .	. 29
C. Elections and Local Politics . . . . .	. 33
D. Network of Communication . . . . .	. 34
Activities . . . . .	. 35
A. The Convention . . . . .	. 35
B. Constitutional Change and Militancy . . . . .	. 53
C. Political Education and Propaganda . . . . .	. 61
D. Patronage . . . . .	. 68
II. Discussion . . . . .	. 70
Recruitment . . . . .	. 70
Watching the Watchdog . . . . .	. 70
Pressure Group Activities . . . . .	. 71
One-Party Welfare State . . . . .	. 72
Improving the Status of Women . . . . .	. 74

Postscript

The Political Demise of Nancy Steele78
--	-----

Appendixes

A Committees . . . . .	.80
B General Resolutions Passed at the Second . . . . .	.81
Convention of National Congress of Sierra Leone Women	

Notes85
-----------------	-----

Bibliography87
------------------------	-----

Preface

As a social anthropologist by training my indebtedness to political scientists of Africa will become apparent in this essay. Notable among them is Thomas Hodgkin whose work on African Political Parties (1961) still ranks as an outstanding pioneering effort. Interestingly enough, Hodgkin's formulations, which were applicable to the period around independence in many African states, continue to have relevance for Sierra Leone where the development of nationalism has proceeded at a much slower pace.

In preparation for the "constitutional talks" in London in 1959 a coalition of all political parties was formed, with the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) in the majority, in order to present a "United Front" to the British government. Any dissenting voice was necessarily subdued while the country prepared for independence on April 27, 1961. The SLPP which was in power at the time of independence was thereby able to maintain a conservative profile which influenced the style and character of subsequent political events in Sierra Leone.

Martin Kilson's perception of this snail-paced nationalism is poignantly portrayed in his authoritative book, Political Change in a West African State (1966), to which I make several references. Another useful adjunct to the study of political change in Sierra Leone is John Cartwright's Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-1967 which follows this process up to the 1967 elections. By this time the subdued voice of dissent had become amplified sufficiently in the form of the All People's Congress (APC) to challenge and defeat the SLPP in the 1967 general election. A coup d'etat and counter coup delayed until 1968 the assuming of the reins of government by the APC. [Ed. note: Both in the Colony and the Protectorate areas the demand for independence grew during the 20th century. In 1951 Dr. Milton Margai, with other leaders from the Protectorate and the Colony, founded the Sierra Leone People's Party which led the movement for the independence and unity of both the Colony and the Protectorate. When independence was won in 1961, the SLPP formed the government under Sir Milton. In 1967 the All People's Congress, led by Dr. Siaka Stevens, won the national election. There was immediately a military coup, in which army officers took control of the country. These officers were replaced after two days by another group who formed the National Reformation Council (NRC). After about a year, the NRC was removed by a third coup, by non-commissioned officers, before Sierra Leone returned to civilian government in April, 1968. Sierra Leone later became a republic under President Stevens. --Quoted from the African Encyclopedia, Oxford University Press: London, 1974.]



National Convention of the NCSLW. Dresses with picture of President Stevens were made especially for the convention.

The present study covers a period of fifteen months (June 1970-September 1971) of field research into the structure and function of women's voluntary associations in Freetown. At this time the APC was trying to consolidate its position as the ruling party. The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women (Congress), the women's wing of the APC, was one of the seventy associations researched. The following case study describes the significant role played by women of this association in accelerating political change in Sierra Leone.

In a future publication of mine a more analytical treatment will be undertaken. Some of the terminology used in this essay may present a few definitional problems when viewed strictly from the standpoint of a political scientist. Wherever possible clarification has been provided.

I have retained the present tense in parts of this account in order to involve the reader more vividly in the activities of Congress and to share some of the excitement of conducting field research on this dynamic association.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research for their generous grant which enabled me to conduct the field research of which this is a small part. My sincere gratitude to Edwin Ardener for his help and encouragement in supervising this research which was part of the requirement for my doctorate degree. I also wish to express my appreciation for the intellectual comradeship of the Women's Group at Oxford University, which held weekly seminars on subjects relating to women. A version of this essay was first presented to this group. Finally, I would like to thank my friends, Susan White, Naomi Chazan, Aforka Nweke, and Henry Steady (who also happens to be my husband) for their useful comments.

I. The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women

The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women, popularly known as Congress, is a political women's association founded in 1960 by Mr. I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, Mrs. Nancy Steele, and Mrs. Princess Gibson-Bucknor.* It is the women's section of the ruling All People's Congress (APC) which came into power in 1968. This party was founded in 1960 by the present head of state, President Siaka Stevens, in a merger with the late Mr. I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson's Radical Democratic Party.

Mr. Wallace-Johnson, a dedicated Marxist, had worked in Ghana with the left-wing oriented National Congress of British West Africa during its formative years and in Sierra Leone with the Youth League during the late 1930s.¹ Dr. Siaka Stevens, an experienced trade union leader, had pursued a training course at Ruskin College, the trade union college, in Oxford, England.

In addition to the radicalism of his trade union background, Dr. Siaka Stevens refused to sign the independence agreement in London at the constitutional talks for independence in 1960.² His refusal was based on his opposition to Britain's continued maintenance of military bases in Sierra Leone after independence, which he felt would submit Sierra Leone to continued British domination. He also insisted on general elections before independence. His proposals were not accepted, but these moves attracted a few extreme nationalists who wanted independence without continued British economic, military, and cultural influences. One of his most dedicated disciples in the formation of his new All People's Congress was Nancy Dolly Steele.

Nancy Steele

Mrs. Steele is the most dynamic force in the Women's Congress and probably the most militant figure to have made an impact in Sierra Leone politics. As Organizing Secretary and co-founder of Congress, she is a strong and determined leader and greatly admired by most of her followers. Her penchant for left-wing politics is attributable to a number

*Personal communication with leaders of Congress, 1971.

of factors, the most abrasive of which may possibly, but not necessarily, have been her very poor background. She was one of seven children and describes her experience of deprivation:

We only had two easy chairs for grown-ups, children did not dare sit on them. We sat on kerosene boxes instead. We had to scrub the chairs and boxes every Saturday and we covered the boxes with antimacassars to make them more decent and comfortable. Our floor was not made of wood or concrete but of plain earth. We never ate our main meal before 7 or 8 p.m. because every day after school we, the girls, had to help my mother to trade at "Big Wharf" before she could get enough money to buy food for the main meal. We used to go home at about 6 or 7 p.m. to cook. We went hungry for a long time and had to do the cooking on empty stomachs.*

Her experience of discrimination during her training as a nurse in England awakened certain nationalistic feelings. After leaving the African Methodist Episcopal Girls' Industrial (Secondary) School, she went to England in 1952 to study nursing at the Edgeware General Hospital. After three years she qualified as a State Registered Nurse and then began a course in midwifery but gave it up because "I disliked midwifery." She took a diploma in social welfare instead and later worked as a nurse in London. She expressed her political awakening, which developed on account of her experiences in England, in the following terms:

My greatest ambition was to be a nurse, so after my schooling I went to England to train as a nurse. I had no feelings of nationalism at this time but my life in England was hard and I experienced discrimination. Black people had to do the hardest and dirtiest jobs and I realized that this was the same exploitation that was taking place in Africa. My national consciousness developed on account of the bad circumstances of

*Personal communication, 1970. All quotations are derived from interviews conducted during my field research between June, 1970, and September, 1971.

black people in England.

In 1956, Mrs. Steele, then Miss Grant, met her future husband at a student dance. She recalled that theirs was a "beautiful courtship" and in 1960 she married Mr. Steele, a West Indian engineer, in England. They had one child--a son, who died in his infancy. Her nationalistic feelings were consolidated in her activities in the Sierra Leone student union during her stay in England, and in her subsequent role in the All People's Congress which formed a branch in London.

Nancy Steele's involvement in politically-oriented organizations was so intense that she gave up nursing and the sedentary life of marriage to become a professional politician. Her political ideology was subsequently formed by various factors. One of them was her frequent visits to Socialist and Communist countries and consequently she became a disciple of left-wing ideologies. She was also influenced by the nationalist philosophy of Kwame Nkrumah (first president of Ghana), whom she knew personally. She had worked closely with Mr. I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, a Marxist. In addition, her friendship with the president, a former trade union leader, is a close one. All of these men worked closely with Nancy Steele and greatly influenced her political career.

The All People's Congress (APC) was formed as the first extra-parliamentary party in opposition to the "United Front," a coalition of parties in the House of Representatives, established to work together for independence. Its main reasons for opposing this coalition were based on its challenge of the terms for independence. In the Constitution of the APC the Preamble states:

The purpose of forming the All People's Congress [is] to organize the common people and tend the masses in the struggle for the attainment of National Independence in an honorable way, bereft of any military ties and economic enslavement by any other power and to avoid any form of alignment either political or economic with any particular block as well as to create a single and unified state in which the same laws and rights applied for everyone throughout the country.

The APC maintained an autonomous stand as it launched its recruitment program. Its membership was expanded through techniques

of mass appeal aimed particularly at the less fortunate, the frustrated, the restless, and all those outside the various hierarchies. Youths and women in particular were attracted to its mass appeal. It has twenty-seven branches throughout the country, but its early success was more apparent in Freetown where it won the municipal elections in 1962. Mrs. Steele was elected councillor, and in 1967 became an Alderman of the Freetown City Council.

In time the APC became more effective as an organ of opposition to the SLPP which gradually lost its popularity. Several other smaller political groups joined the APC as it consolidated its mass appeal to win the general elections of 1967.³ Its assumption of power was delayed by a coup d'etat and counter coup, but in 1968 it finally formed a government with its leader, Dr. Siaka Stevens, as Prime Minister.

Autonomy and Female Power

Although the All People's Congress aims its appeal at every Sierra Leonean irrespective of sex, its Constitution clearly highlights the inclusion of women in the party machinery. The words "woman" and "women" appear throughout as a deliberate move to ensure their representation and participation in the various organs of the party. The Constitution gives formal recognition to the Congress of Sierra Leone Women as the official women's wing of the party:

There shall be a women's section, which shall be known as the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women and which shall be under the complete control of the central organization.*

This article is the most precious constitutional item for Congress. Whenever the association is threatened by other women's political groups, or by secession of a section of its membership, as has twice happened, it proclaims its constitutional right of existence as well as its position of monopoly by citing this article.

In addition to having an official women's section of the party, provision is also made for female representation at the various levels of political organization. Most of these leaders who represent women in

*The Constitution of the APC, Article 15.

branch executives, at constituency executives, and at the annual conference of the party are members of Congress.

Congress has no wider affiliations with other women's associations since the aim of the APC, of which Congress is a part, is to gain mass support in order to maintain a position of dominance. As a result Congress pursues a policy of non-affiliation with other women's associations. It is generally regarded by the leadership that affiliation would lead to a surrender of Congress' autonomy and prominence. Although a National Federation of Sierra Leone Women's Organizations (popularly known as the Federation) exists, there is a tendency for Congress to regard itself as the association representing the women of Sierra Leone. Affiliation to the Federation would therefore be tantamount to a surrender of its position of dominance.* This has led to the tendency on the part of Congress to ignore the Federation.

The argument of the Federation on the other hand is that it is a national federation of Sierra Leone Women's associations which seeks to be the parent association of all national and local women's associations with varying interests and objectives. It insists on remaining apolitical because of the non-political aims of its member associations and because its chances of survival are greater as a non-political association since it will not become subject to the vicissitudes of political life.**

In the final result Congress emerges supreme because of its alliance with the government. It derives certain benefits and patronage from this position. For example, invitations to conferences which come to the government from overseas women's organizations are reputedly given to Congress instead of the Federation which claims to be a more accurate representation of Sierra Leone women. Higher ranking women of Congress have been given directorships in public corporations and priority in filling certain jobs.

The success of Congress in maintaining its autonomy is contingent upon the APC remaining in power. Consequently, its influence in the various constitutional changes which have enabled the APC to maintain and strengthen its position of dominance has been profound as will be demonstrated.

*Personal communication with one of the leaders of Congress, 1970.

**Personal communication with an officer of the National Federation of Sierra Leone Women's Organizations, 1971.

Congress' aim is to gain support for the ruling party and this is measured in terms of membership. Recruitment of women to the party has been actively carried out by Mrs. Steele through her efforts at inaugurating new branches throughout the country. The branch is the basic organization of the party and is considered to be a very important support base. But branch membership is not the only form of recruitment used. Further attempts at enlarging the membership is made by instituting specialized groups within Congress. The first group formed along these lines was the Women's Farmers Cooperative. Another was the Marketing Cooperative inaugurated in the various branches. In this way Congress hopes to increase its membership by offering services which cater to the needs of a wide variety of women, many of whom are traders.

When Congress was formed in 1961 its specific purpose was "To bring all progressive women of Sierra Leone together regardless of tribe, religion or class."* Congress has no separate Constitution from the APC since it is a section of the party but it has by-laws which seek to protect women's interests and advance their status in more specific terms. Women of Congress hope, for instance, to share in the leadership of the country by "Uniting women of all ages under one banner in order to strengthen the claims and rights of women alongside the menfolk in terms of service and leadership."**

It is firmly believed by both the leadership and the rank and file membership that women have an important role to play in nation-building and the following phrase is often quoted:

As a nation cannot rise above its womanhood
so also is a nation's struggle not beyond the
capacities of its women.

Members of Congress identify with achievements of women in nation-building in different areas of the world. It is common to punctuate deliberations at meetings with citations of achievements of women in countries such as Algeria, Vietnam, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and China. These women are often praised for their contribution to the liberation struggle of their countries even to the extent of physical combat. Women in Sierra Leone are urged to emulate these examples so as to advance the national struggle for peace and economic progress.

*By-laws of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women.

**Ibid.

The autonomy of Congress is best exemplified in its independent structure and function as well as its cooperation with the central organization and allied organizations such as the Youth League. It holds its own conventions and passes its own resolutions. In addition it arranges its own public meetings and demonstrations independently. In many ways it is the most active body of the APC, as will be seen in the following analysis of its structure and functions, and despite the indication in the Constitution of complete control of Congress by the central party, it has emerged as an autonomous female political association.

Leadership Structure

It will be clear from an analysis of the structure of Congress that, despite its radical image, insofar as it can be seen in Freetown society as desiring change, it tends to adhere more closely to conservative patterns.

A. The Executive

Leadership within the Congress is divided into two main bodies: the Executive Committee and the Working Committee. Elections are held at the triennial National Convention. There are no salaried officers. The positions are all voluntary.

The following officers make up the Executive Committee: President, Vice-President, Organizing Secretary, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Propaganda Secretary, Political Secretary, Social Secretary, and Assistant Social Secretary. The significance of the positions and the various duties performed can be briefly outlined.

The position of President is essentially an honorary post, a figure-head symbolizing the unity of the women of Congress. The President seldom attends national meetings but may occasionally grace the platform during conventions and public meetings. One of the reasons for her decorative rather than functional role is that there are no precise constitutional stipulations outlining the duties of the Presidency and she is therefore unsure of how much power or influence she has. Moreover, the present President, Mrs. Stella Ralph James, who was once very active and prominent in public life and was one of the original members of the APC, is sixty-eight years old and in poor health. Her position is, therefore, one of honor such as may be conferred on an eminent elder. It does not involve decision-making.

The office of Vice-President is also a titular position and often goes to an elderly woman of elegance and high social standing who has a traditional rather than a modern orientation. This, of course, is contrary to the radical posture of Congress and is one of the contradictions which will be amplified in a subsequent publication aimed at giving a more analytical treatment to several of the problems raised here.

These women in the main have not received formal schooling (and therefore to some extent do have something in common with the masses), but as a result of their outstanding abilities as traders, community leaders, religious leaders,* or mothers of successful children, they have gained the respect of others and are often distinguished by being addressed as "Madam."

The custom of ascribing the position of Vice-President to a woman of high social standing is widely established in Congress at both the national and branch levels. It is particularly noticeable at the branch level where the Vice-President is given a seat on the platform whenever the meeting is conducted by the President or Secretary. The Vice-Presidency has a dual purpose. It is a position of recognition for the woman who, in spite of her lack of formal schooling, has achieved social eminence. This recognition prevents the monopoly of leadership positions by educated women who possess the necessary literary skills to conduct a meeting according to parliamentary procedure, but who may not have attained a high social status in terms of having gained the respect of others by distinguishing themselves in any of the categories mentioned above. As a branch secretary explained: "Most of the time you will find that the Vice-President is a woman without formal schooling. This category was specially created to give senior women who are not educated some status, especially if they are important women in their communities."

The Organizing Secretary's position is the most important, both in terms of her role in administration and in decision-making. Mrs. Nancy Steele, the Organizing Secretary of Congress, is the main force in the association and, as will be seen, her charisma and influence is felt at all levels. She is a co-founder of Congress.

The Secretary, Mrs. P. Gibson-Bucknor, is also one of the founders of Congress and the editor of the party's newspaper, We Yone.

*"Haja"--a Moslem woman who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

She receives a salary from the party as editor but is not a paid official of Congress since all offices of Congress are voluntary.

The Treasurer is in charge of the finances which are derived mainly from subscriptions. Occasionally some financial aid is received from the government. In addition donations are frequently made by party officials or government ministers.

The Propaganda Secretary is mainly responsible for implementing the types of party activities which necessitate propaganda and political education. She is most active during periods of electioneering.

The Political Secretary's duties involve close cooperation with the members of the Central Committee of the APC as well as with the Youth League. Whenever delegations are formed to meet with the president or other government officials, the Political Secretary usually acts as coordinator. She also assists the Propaganda Secretary with the planning of programs for political education.

The Social Secretary undertakes the planning of any social functions of Congress as well as arranging with the Central Committee any celebrations or entertainment plans.

The Executive from time to time appoints ad hoc committees for specific duties. The Executive has emergency powers and can take action on any matter considered urgent. This power is most frequently used during periods of political unrest.

The leader of the party and therefore the ultimate leader of Congress is President Siaka Stevens. He is generally regarded by the women of Congress as the symbol of the party as well as the embodiment of the nation. His presence at huge political rallies or at National Conventions of Congress tends to invoke great excitement from the women.

B. The Working Committee

This is the most important administrative body of the Congress and forms a link between the Executive and the National Congress. It formulates policy by making recommendations to the National Executive. After a decision is reached by the National Executive, it is referred to the Working Committee before it is disseminated to the National Congress. A feedback process also occurs when matters requiring policy

formulation are derived from the monthly National Assembly of Congress. They are first referred to the Working Committee where they are discussed and subsequently referred to the National Executive.

The Working Committee meets at frequent intervals (usually once a week) and in this way is able to maintain the communication necessary for a policy-making body. Its relatively small size allows for full discussion by committee members. It has a strategic location in the general communications network of Congress in that it falls between the Executive and the National Congress and is made up of officers who play an important leadership role in Congress. The President and Secretary of each branch are often branch representatives at meetings of the Working Committee and thereby become involved in the formulation of policy. Branch representatives can also bring to the committee a wide range of local and national issues so that problems for deliberation could lead to policy formulation and action.

Issues for Policy Formulation at the Working Committee. The following account of a discussion which took place at a meeting of the Working Committee on July 8th, 1971, serves to demonstrate the range of issues usually discussed in the Working Committee.

(1) Shortage of Schools*

Member: I am concerned with the school problem. The school children are now on holidays but in a few months time they will have to return to school. But only the lucky ones return to secondary school. Due to this new and difficult selective entrance examination, hundreds of children have been turned down for not making the grade to secondary school. One school turned down 100, another 200. This is a terrible problem and it affects all constituencies. What is going to happen to these children? I think it is a crisis situation and demands prompt attention. The Sierra Leone Women's Congress should go and ask government to help solve this problem.

Chairman: This is a very important problem. We should go to the government and ask them to look into this urgent situation. But please let us go with suggestions. For example, there is an old building which has never been finished. It was intended

*This continues to be a problem in Sierra Leone.

for a school. We could ask the government to try and get it for us and we can then turn it into a school. The problem is getting worse so we should go to the government with constructive suggestions. One of the problems is that the city is overcrowded, so naturally we have a shortage of everything. We should try and control this speedy migration to the city. Freetown is too small. We should try and develop schools in the provinces, and encourage children and teachers to go there. If need be we should give teachers extra salary inducements, a sort of expatriate allowance. The problem is quite serious but we are not alone in it. It is common in Africa. There is a shortage of schools everywhere, in the towns. Even the shift system which operates in many schools is not enough.

Another problem is that there is not enough diversity in education. For instance there is very little training available in vocational education. We should help prepare our children through vocational training. We should try and raise funds to help these projects through luncheon sales, etc.

Another way of helping to solve the problem of shortage of teachers is to encourage retired school mistresses and those who gave up teaching after marriage to return to teaching even if only on a part-time basis. We shall refer these matters to the Executive and take these suggestions to the government.

(2) Inefficiency of Hospital Services*

Member: I want to bring up some problems regarding hospital service and administration. A good number of nurses only go into nursing for the money. They are not interested in the job. Their attitudes are sometimes very rude. I feel they are young and inexperienced and do not have patience or understanding. I realize of course that some of them are overworked. Some of the conditions are appalling. At the maternity hospital, there are times when there are as many as twenty-four deliveries and only two nurses in attendance.

At the Connaught hospital (the main general hospital) there was a case the other day in which a patient died. The patient was taken in very late at night and none of the regular wards had

*An inquiry was held into hospital conditions in Sierra Leone in 1974.

beds. The sister on duty at the Extension which usually has private patients refused to attend to the patient because the patient's doctor had no bed at the Extension. He may have been a junior doctor because I gather that the senior doctors monopolize all the beds between them and at times even allocate the facilities and instruments for their own private use.

The patient who was very ill was just left leaning on her relatives who had brought her. The senior sister abandoned her and went downstairs to talk to her husband who had come to see her on duty. The woman eventually died. Newspaper reports stating that some patients die waiting for a doctor are no exaggeration. The Minister of Health, Mr. Cyril Foray, has a responsibility to put things like this right. We should form a delegation and go and pressure him for action against such evil practices existing in our hospitals.

Member: I am against doctors having their own beds in hospitals.

Member: You also hear of complaints about shortage of medicines. They are always out of medicines but in the corner for a "dash" (fee) there is always medicine.

Member: The doctors are also very neglectful. Some don't go to work on Sundays even when they are on duty. Only one or two are really interested in their patients.

Chairman: We shall refer this matter to the Executive for decision and choose a delegation to pressure the Minister of Health for enquiry into hospital conditions. We shall also write a letter of protest. Are we all in favor?

Response: (Unanimous) Yes.

(3) Seeking Justice. It is not unusual for people in Freetown society who feel powerless to do something they feel is just and right to seek the help of those they regard as being in power or having influence. Since the APC is in power and Congress is the women's wing of the APC, women in distress often see Congress as a sympathetic organ which, because of its female membership, is more likely to lend a compassionate ear to their plea than would an all-male

association. Those who feel they need the backing of someone powerful have therefore often sought the help of Congress. The next item discussed at this Working Committee meeting is a good illustration of this reliance on institutions of power by the powerless.

Chairman: One of our members has an unusual request for legal help and Congress' support for a friend. Mrs. Davies, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Davies: Five days ago, there was a fatal accident along Syke Street involving a boy on a bicycle and a car driven by a policeman. So far nothing much has been heard about the case even though the police know about it. The dead boy's sister and her husband came to see me, knowing I was a member of Congress, to see if we could help. They feel that the police are trying to quash the case since this boy was killed by a policeman, and the family want to see justice done. The people are waiting outside, and I want them to come in and tell their story.

Chairman: All right, Mrs. Davies, ask the people to come in and report the case.

The guests came in and recounted their story in tears. They also brought a piece of the boy's blood-stained clothing and this aroused tears and anger from the members.

Guests: (Victim's Sister) I feel powerless, knowing the police are trying to quash the case. But I don't want my brother to just die like that. He should have justice and I know you women have influence. Please, my sisters, help me see that justice is done. (She cries and cries.)

Chairman: I think that they should get a private lawyer, one that can take on the police since they are trying to slow things up. We shall help you get a good lawyer to fight them. Thank you for coming and telling us your sad story. If you wait outside until the end of this meeting, I'll accompany you personally to our Organizing Secretary and tell her everything and I am sure she will help and suggest a good lawyer. I can assure you that you have our support. Justice will be seen to be done.*

*By the time of my departure for Oxford the case had not been taken to court, but attempts were being made to settle the matter out of court.

Any other points to be discussed?

(4) Queries about Non-Productive Programs

Member: Yes, Madam Chairman. I wish to comment on two things. At a previous meeting, someone suggested that we should have an arts and crafts meeting. I don't think we should just suggest these and do nothing more about them. We should have a display of craft products and then sell the objects and raise some money for Congress. And there is also the "Sweep the Streets" campaign. What happened to it? It started well and then slowed up. We were supposed to have badges for "Clean the City" campaign.

Member: Mrs. Bona suggested that one man should go with the women when they are sweeping yard to yard, for protection.

Member: A doctor of public health was supposed to come and talk to us, but I suspect it is not going to be very instructive. It is just to say "Well done" for your "Keep the City Clean" campaign.

Member: Some members thought they would be paid for cleaning the streets. When they saw nothing forthcoming their enthusiasm died down. After all, it is not a pleasant job, is it?

Member: How about the Women's Farmers Cooperatives? Someone should check on the President for a progress report. She was supposed to secure land in the provinces but she was having difficulties. You know how hard it is to get tribal land in the provinces. Nevertheless she should be asked to give us a report.

Chairman: Thank you very much ladies. Your suggestions have all been noted and will be recommended to the Executive. The school problem and the hospital problem are urgent and we shall recommend to the Executive to treat them as emergencies. All the other projects you mentioned will be looked into. We shall now adjourn. Are we all agreed?

Members: Yes.

Chairman: The meeting is adjourned.

The matters were taken to the Executive which decided to send a delegation to the government regarding the issues of shortage of school places and hospital service and administration. Committees were then set up at the next general meeting to look into the other matters raised.

C. The Nucleus of Leadership

Congress has a leadership corps composed of four women but dominated by the strong personality of Nancy Steele. This collective leadership does not reside in the Executive alone but also in the Working Committee. In these two bodies there are four women whose unflagging energy, devotion, and expenditure of resources have made them the nucleus of Congress' leadership. These women are: Mrs. Nancy Steele, Organizing Secretary, Alderman of the City Council, State Registered Nurse (retired), and co-founder of Congress; Mrs. Princess Gibson-Bucknor, Secretary and co-founder of Congress, editor of the party paper, We Yone; Mrs. Daisy Bona, Publicity Secretary of the Working Committee, secretary of the Women's Cooperative of Congress, former member of the police force, part-time sales supervisor at a large local firm and part-time journalist; Miss Delma Dove-Edwin, Assistant Secretary of the Working Committee, daughter of a retired Supreme Court judge, educated in England, and at present manager of a Freetown travel agency.

These four women form the nucleus of organizational energy. Apart from organizing and presiding at formal meetings, they meet frequently and informally to plan, organize, and make decisions. Frequently held meetings at the house of the Organizing Secretary help to cement their bond of common interest and cooperation. Interviews with them reveal the strong bonds of friendship which to a large measure accounts for the high degree of cooperation.

Since cooperation rests on vested interest in Congress by the leadership and on good relationship among the leaders, the nature of party discipline has not been an important issue. Only once since its inception has it been necessary to set up a disciplinary committee to investigate complaints about one of the officers and this was done at the instigation of the membership and not by the leadership. The members had complained to Mrs. Steele that the Publicity Secretary often treated them with disrespect and was very autocratic and tactless in her manner. Older women in particular felt offended, since it is generally taken for granted in Sierra Leone that old age deserves automatic respect.

Decision-Making

A. Influence of Mrs. Steele

There are no strict constitutional procedures for arriving at decisions except during emergency situations when decisions are taken by the Executive. In general, decisions vary in kind from personal to collective but the decision-making process is greatly influenced by Nancy Steele, the Organizing Secretary. This is particularly true of decisions pertaining to policy. Although she is not a parliamentary representative, Alderman Nancy Steele maintains very close liaison with the Central Committee of the party. Political decisions on policy for Congress are therefore made by her or relayed by her to the general meeting. Being the most experienced politician in Congress, she wields considerable influence in political decisions.

Through a personal network of communication, Mrs. Steele also has a great deal of influence on decisions made in the official bodies and the various committees of Congress as well as at the branch level, and maintains an active liaison with all the various sections of Congress. There is a tendency for most matters to be referred to Mrs. Steele, even trivial ones. In these instances she often has to make spontaneous decisions. This enhances her decision-making powers since constant consultation is tantamount to a tacit vote of confidence in her leadership. Her constant personal communications network between Congress and the main party, between Congress and the Youth League, and between the various bodies, committees, and branches within Congress puts her in a pivotal position which ensures a pervading influence in all major decision-making.

B. Reduction of Tensions

Decisions relating to reconciliation of internal controversies are essentially made by Mrs. Steele. Her position, power, and dynamism enable her to wield considerable influence as a trouble-shooter. The role of arbitrator is one which she executes with tremendous astuteness and subtlety by bringing to bear a whole range of sanctions and diplomatic maneuvers from traditional life and local experience.

Tensions have generally been minimized because of the diplomatic influence and charisma* of Mrs. Steele which tend to obscure her

*This was certainly an undisputable quality which I not only witnessed but also experienced myself. For example, when Mrs. Steele would enter a roomful of members, they would spontaneously stand and glowingly cheer her.

autocratic proclivities. She carries out this role of mediator very astutely by never allowing an argument to deteriorate to the extent of threatening the cohesiveness of the association. She often takes prompt action to arrest such threats by establishing a truce between the parties. These tensions may occur within the leadership or in the rank and file membership.

One of the Organizing Secretary's methods of reducing tensions is by imposing subtle curbs on individuals publicly and indirectly. She is the only one who can publicly criticize other leaders without inviting resentment from them. This is possible partly because her position of dominance remains unchallenged and partly because she often criticizes herself in public meetings. Most of the criticisms of other leaders are diplomatically styled and administered. For example, in responding to complaints about the Publicity Secretary's behavior to members, she replied:

Look upon her as your child. What can you do with a hot-tempered child but have patience. I have often said to her "You are hard-working but you have a hot temper." I will not talk behind her back. You ask her, have I not warned you about your temper? Do bear with her. She only means to work for Congress but she will have to control her temper.

This double-ended tactic of reproach on the one hand and praise on the other is known locally as "bite and blow" diplomacy. On another occasion Mrs. Steele employed this technique to coerce the Secretary into taking notes during meetings. Since the Secretary is a founder-member and an older woman, the Organizing Secretary could not, because of traditional constraints, take any sterner measures other than to coax her into taking notes or tease her into resigning.

I do not understand some officers of Congress. What shall we do about our records? Our Secretary is supposed to take notes at meetings but she never does. She is a hard-working woman and helped to start Congress but she will not take notes even though she is Secretary. What shall we do with her? If she is getting old and tired, let her tell us so we can replace her.

This diplomatic "bite and blow" technique is often effectively employed by Mrs. Steele to minimize tensions. By public criticism she expresses tensions and airs grievances. By offering praise she is able to reconcile these grievances in an honorable way.

C. Collective Decisions

The majority of decisions relating to the activities of Congress are made by the nucleus in close cooperation with the Executive and the Working Committee. These range from questions of administration and activities to community relations and welfare. Each branch is represented in the Working Committee by its president and secretary and is therefore brought in contact with policy and decision-making. At conventions, decisions are made through the passing of resolutions. The Executive has powers to make emergency decisions. The various specialized committees co-opted from time to time have their own decision-making powers relating to their specific function but are also in close communication with the Working Committee. Each individual leader of the nucleus tends to feature in specific types of decisions. For instance, decisions involving the planning of entertainment or a ceremony are greatly influenced by the Assistant Secretary of the Working Committee. She is young, educated, attractive, and has great organizing ability for ceremonies and functions of a social nature. She therefore assumes a very important role in decisions of this type and often expends a lot of energy and resources in planning and executing these functions. On the day of the occasion itself, she often takes the prominent and glamorous role of compere.

Branches make decisions pertaining to their local activities and interests. General decisions are made by vote at the monthly general meetings, but these are often maneuvered and directed by the leadership. They often deal with decisions already made by the Executive, ratified by the Working Committee, and presented for a general approval by the National Assembly.

A brief summary of the types of decisions made by the various groups and officers of Congress is outlined in Figure 1 (page 23).

Membership

The majority of the members joined Congress after the party had come into power. Becoming a member involves a very simple procedure.

Figure 1

Decision-Making Table of Congress

<u>Type of Decision</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Decision-Making Body</u>
Personal	Political Policy (ideology)	Mrs. Steele
Personal	Emergency	Mrs. Steele
Party	Political	Mrs. Steele and Party
Collective Decision	Administrative	Working Committee
Collective Decision	Strategies Activities	Mrs. Steele and Nucleus
Collective Decision	Emergency	Mrs. Steele and Executive
Collective Decision	Agriculture	Women farmers
General Decision	Choosing delegates and representatives, concessions, jobs, subscriptions	General but maneuvered by Mrs. Steele
Collective Decisions	Demonstrations	Emergency General Meeting led by Mrs. Steele
Conventions	Resolutions	Delegates
Collective Decision	Planning specific campaigns, entertainment	Temporary committees
Branch Decisions	Local issues	Branch membership
Branch Decisions	Party issues	Branch executive

A prospective member usually registers with a branch and pays a membership fee of 50 cents. This subscription is an enrollment fee which goes to the National Congress. Thereafter a fee of 20 cents is paid to the National Congress every month. Branch fees vary from 20 to 50 cents a month. The decision on the amount to be paid is usually taken by each branch and arrived at by a collective vote. A membership card is issued upon joining. There is no further formality attached to joining, no pledges are made or signed, and a member's support is based on faith and on understanding that she would promote the interests of the party. The average member participates by attending meetings, taking part in discussions, joining in demonstrations, and contributing to the branch fund either by paying her dues or by taking part in fund-raising ventures.

Many members, including the leaders, join Congress for reasons of self-interest. By overtly supporting the party in power, women hope to gain individually. For instance some women hope to gain scholarships for their children, others to do better trading. Some hope to secure jobs and others to have concessions or loans in their commercial ventures. A few women whose husbands are in government service join so as to safeguard their husbands' positions by demonstrating goodwill towards the party (i. e., the government). Wives of cabinet ministers are also active members and a number of women who are reputed to be the mistresses of high government officials also give their unflagging support. In addition to these, there is also a substantial number of women who habitually join women's political associations regardless of party affiliation. These are usually the incurable curiosity seekers.

Another type of woman who is attracted to Congress is one who seeks "status," who wishes to be seen and known and to be engaged in public participation in one form or another. This is the woman who is not a "career woman" but would have liked to have been one had the opportunity presented itself. Participation in a political party provides a substitute to the public life a career would have given her.

The aim of Congress as has been stated is to become a mass party so as to ensure the electoral strength of the party. Membership is therefore open to all ethnic, religious, and social groups. It is open to women of all educational levels, but it has failed so far to attract the highly educated or professional woman unless she is interested in a political career, and very few professional women in Sierra Leone have this interest.* Congress appeals to women at all occupational levels

*Mainly because of the demands of their jobs (as revealed in interviews), but also because of the instability of politics in Sierra Leone and indeed in Africa as a whole.

and claims to have a membership of over 30,000 in the country and 5,000 in Freetown.* The majority of members in Freetown are women engaged in commerce or other forms of self-employment. The next largest group are the skilled and semi-skilled shop attendants and clerical workers; then come a few elementary school teachers and nurses. Only five can be regarded as "professional," and four of these are in the leadership.

So far, then, the appeal of Congress has been to the lower middle-class and lower-class women. These women, the majority of whom are petty traders struggling against unfavorable marketing conditions and the ruthlessness of the foreign middle-man, believe that by becoming members of Congress they could better their situations by receiving some concessions in trade which would enable them to increase their narrow profit margin. Other women join in the hope of securing employment through the efforts of Congress.

In reality, however, the number of women who derive any economic benefits from Congress is very small. A number of women in fact complained to me that membership in Congress has contributed to their impoverishment since they are frequently asked to make contributions, donations, or subscriptions to some activity of Congress for which they receive nothing in return. For the poor trader who has to eke out a living from a meager turnover in the market, a subscription of 10 cents could leave her bereft of fish for the next day's meal. A few very disillusioned ones wanted to discontinue their membership, but felt that once they had joined and had been "seen" it would be unwise to sever their links lest they be labeled "anti-government."

The following is an illustration of the range of women who join Congress.

Mrs. A is a widow of 45. She has three children and finds it extremely difficult to pay their school fees on her meager earnings of \$90 a month as an elementary school teacher (of fifteen years standing). Her reason for joining Congress is to support the party in power in the hope that she will secure for her son a scholarship for advanced training overseas. So far she has not been able to do so, although she is an active member of

*It was very difficult to secure accurate figures for Congress since some branches kept very poor records. These figures are a combination of those from available records and from interviews with the leaders.

Congress and is President of one of the local branches.

Mrs. B is a very attractive woman in her middle years (45-65). She is widowed and has an annual income of about \$6000 from her business. She lives in a beautiful house which was a bequest from her husband. By local standards she is well-off and has made three trips to England on vacation. She is only a nominal member of Congress but desires to be seen and regarded as a supporter of the ruling party for reasons of "security." In addition, she wants to ensure that she receives whatever business concessions such membership could bestow.

Mrs. C is a petty trader. She has a stall of print dress fabrics in front of her house. She is a member of Congress because she likes to be involved in the affairs of the country so as to help it move forward with progress. She wants the country to prosper so that there will be peace and she will be prosperous in her business.

Mrs. D, a very poor market trader, is typical of the majority of Congress' members. She sells vegetables at Big Market and when conditions are favorable makes a profit of 10-20 cents a day. She is a member of Congress because all the people in her yard (compound) are APC supporters. She feels that she had to appear in favor of the government and join Congress or else they would be thrown out of their one-room apartment and her husband would be thrown out of his job. He is a messenger at one of the government departments. She finds being a member of Congress financially impoverishing, because rather than improving her condition, she is usually asked to make contributions which she can ill afford.

Mrs. E has always joined a ruling party because she feels this to be her duty. Her husband is a clerk and she trades in cooked foodstuff. She feels that joining a ruling party provides her with something exciting to do besides trading and cooking. She enjoys going to meetings because she likes to listen to women making speeches and arguing.

She feels this is a pleasant diversion to her daily routine. She would like to gain something from it, but cannot hope for much because she knows parties always make promises but do not keep them.

Mrs. F is a civil servant. She is one of the handful of professional women who are members of Congress. Her motives are opportunistic. She hopes that by affiliating herself with Congress she would be well-favored for promotion in her job. She also revealed that she had political ambitions.

Mrs. G owns a pub and feels that in her business it is good policy to be affiliated to the ruling party. People who come to pubs can be rough and she wants to be sure of government protection should she ever need it.

The Branch

The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women is made up of branches in keeping with the Constitution of the All People's Congress. Article 5 of this Constitution describes the branch as the basic party organization. This Article also outlines the structure and function of branch organization of the party, but some of these features have been modified by Congress.

A. Article 5. The Branch - The Basic Party Organization

(i) The party shall establish branches in all towns and villages in Sierra Leone. Each branch shall be governed by a branch Executive Committee. The branch shall appoint full-time officers where funds permit (so far no full-time officer has been appointed).

(ii) Branches shall deal direct with their respective constituency headquarters. (Modification: Congress branches do not tend to relate with the constituency headquarters since there is a great deal of communication between the Executive and the branches as well as with the National Congress.) There shall be a general meeting of each branch at least once a month. (Modification: This varies from branch to branch.)

(iii) Branch Executive Committee

There shall be a branch Executive Committee consisting of the following officers: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Propaganda Secretary, four Executive members, and a branch women's leader. (Modification: The branches of Congress have modified the post of Chairman. Instead there is a President and a Vice-President. The Vice-Presidency has had to be included at the branch level also and has the same relevance as the Vice-Presidency of the national body in that it is a post reserved for women with social status but no formal education. On another level this helps to mitigate against accusations of monopoly of high posts by educated women. A branch "women's leader" has not been deemed necessary by Congress for obvious reasons. It is interesting to note that Congress has not chosen to elect a branch "men's leader." In the branches in the provinces the resident minister is expected to liaise with Congress in his job as party watchdog.)

Members who reside in Freetown often have dual membership in that they are likely to belong to one of the Freetown branches as well as to the National Congress. In the provinces members are not required to register with the national body. Often this entails additional expense and the distance involved makes it impractical for them to participate in the national monthly meetings. A representative can, however, be sent to the monthly meetings in Freetown if a branch in the provinces so desires.

Branch members are kept in touch with the various activities and policies of Congress through the general meetings held once a month. Any member can attend these meetings. Furthermore, the Working Committee which meets once a week and which is the main administrative body of Congress has in its membership the President and Secretary of each branch.

The degree of formality and informality varies from one branch to another. Branch meetings, on the whole, are intended to be democratic. All members have an opportunity to voice their opinions and to take part in the discussions. Decisions are arrived at by voting, but can often be swayed by the leadership.

The degree to which this right to free expression is exercised

varies from a rowdy ping-pong type conversation during meetings to the more strictly observed parliamentary procedure. Meetings comprising women conversant with parliamentary procedure tend to be more orderly so that most views and opinions are likely to be more clearly heard, discussed, and evaluated.

B. The Sociological Significance of Branch Meetings

The branch facilitates recruitment by bringing the party to the people. In so doing it becomes sociologically significant in that it serves to weld the members together in their struggle toward specific goals. For an example, in East II the majority of women are market women and petty traders. Their vested interest is in trade; hence, they tend to center their deliberations on the improvements of their various opportunities for trade, and the branch provides them with an avenue for articulating their needs, problems, and aspirations. Since the President and Secretary of each branch are members of the Working Committee, these problems are communicated to the Working Committee and eventually to the Executive.

The branch offers membership at a level where the more basic aspects of social groupings like neighborhood, kin, and friendship ties can be evoked. They serve therefore as avenues for sociability and as meeting places for friends, neighbors, and acquaintances to socialize or to air their grievances. The branch also has the effect of keeping members informed about the well-being of their fellow members. Ill members are visited, members get invited to celebrations and to after-death rituals. Quarrels are judged and partners reconciled. The latest gossips are exchanged.

The following is a report of a meeting in which party issues had to await consideration of matters of urgent concern to a community where spiritual affairs and ritual assume preeminence over political interests. It illustrates the importance given in this section to the sociology of branch meetings.

East II Branch - A General Meeting. A general meeting of the East II branch was held on Wednesday, 7th July 1971, in a schoolroom off Fourah Bay Road. The majority of the thirty members who came to the meeting arrived late. The meeting was called to order at about 6 p.m. by the Secretary, an ex-nurse in her early forties. The meeting commenced with prayers of both Islamic and Christian faiths which were followed by the reading of the minutes of the last meeting. The minutes were approved verbally but were not seconded or signed.

A letter of appreciation from the bereaved family of one of the members was then read, thanking the branch for its contribution of two leones (\$4.00) toward funeral expenses. The letter also invited the branch members to participate in the forthcoming "Forty Day" ceremony to mark the end of the period of public mourning for the deceased member. The Secretary then attempted to dismiss discussion of the letter and move to other matters, but she was interrupted.

Member: I think that it is far more important to discuss the Forty Day for our departed member. When someone is dead their concern takes place above all else.

Member 2: I agree. That is important. Let us talk about the Forty Day.

Member 3: It is easy to talk about going, what about contributing?

Member 4: Well, let us all "throw" money.

Member 5: I don't think we should "throw" any more money. After all, we have already contributed for her funeral expenses.

Member 6: How can you talk so cheaply of the death? It is her farewell. We have to "throw" money.

Member 5: Well, count me out. That woman kept me in malice for two whole years before she died. I am not going to "throw" a penny.

Member 3: Well, as you know she is now in the world of spirits so you must not talk ill of her. Now if you were a good Muslim you would not talk like that.

Member 5: Do, I beg of you, I am not a Muslim. I am a Christian.⁴ Get that straight from now on.

Member 6: What does it matter? We all have Forty Day ceremonies. Let us hurry up and settle this contribution so we can go home.

Member 7: How much contribution should we make?

Member 4: Let everyone give 30 cents.

Member 2: Where shall I find 30 cents?

Member 7: Well, let's give 20 cents.

Member 2: I still don't have 20 cents.

Member 5: I am not even giving air.

Member 7: We have heard that before. You are not a good Christian either.

Member 5: Don't rub your mouth on me. Just you watch it.

Member 7: We all know you and your mouth.

Secretary (Chairman): All right, women, let's not start jumping at each other's throats. We shall all "throw" what we can afford for the Forty Day and I will keep a check of it. I will write each person's name down and the contribution beside it. Everybody agreed?

Chorus: Yes.

Secretary collects the money and then moves on to the next business.

Chairman: This branch has not been very active for a long time, ladies. All we do is make a lot of noise. All the other branches are doing things--even village branches like Newton have held fundraising thanksgiving. I suggest we hold a luncheon sale.

Member 1: We are the largest constituency but we are so inactive.

Member 9: This is the rainy season. I don't think it will be a good idea to hold a luncheon sale. People won't come and if it is held in the open rains might ruin it.

Member 10: I think we should have our priorities right. God is first. Let us have a thanksgiving service first and then dance afterwards. We can print envelopes for every member to make their contribution to God first.

Member 7: We must not forget that printing of envelopes costs money and the branch has no funds at the moment.

Chairman: I suggest we have a luncheon sale instead since this will involve no expense for the branch.

Treasurer: I am also in favor of having the luncheon sale first, then we can at least have some funds in the branch to print our thanksgiving envelopes. The cost for the sale is borne by each member. This is how it works: You cook something and sell it at a profit. You take out the money you spent and give the profit to the branch. That way nobody loses.

Chairman: All right, so we all agree on luncheon sale first.

Chorus: Yes.

Member 10: I still say we pray first, but anyway majority carries the vote.

Chairman: Let us have some suggestions for a chief opener of the luncheon sale.

Member 2: I suggest the M.P. for East II.

Member 5: I suggest Alderman Jenner-Cole.

Member 7: I suggest Councillor Mrs. Esther Coker.

Member 1: I suggest Alderman Mrs. Nancy Steele.

Chairman: We can have all of them as openers and one chief opener. So let us vote.

The vote is taken and M.P. Allen is elected.*

Chairman: I think August 4th at 11:00 a.m. at the Community

*Those who voted for M.P. Allen indicated when interviewed afterwards that prestige and not sexual affiliation was the determining factor. M.P. Allen holds national political office as opposed to the others whose political offices are only effective at the local level.

Centre would be a good idea. Is this all right with you all?

Chorus: Yes.

Chairman: As you all see, I am asking for your suggestions and you have all participated in making these decisions. I don't want anyone to go and say I did it all alone. You can still change things if you like. Some people are in the habit of accusing others of domineering everyone. Everyone shall make a contribution. They keep saying and muttering that some people monopolize all the top offices. We should all do our bit. I am all for that. Everything should not be left to the Secretary.

Member 1: We must remember the bad experience of our last luncheon sale. It was a loss for some people. It was badly organized.

Chairman: Time is pressing now. We shall have to call an emergency meeting to continue discussing the luncheon sale. All agreed.

Chorus: Yes.

Chairman: Well, meeting is adjourned.

C. Elections and Local Politics

The branch unit becomes extremely important during the time of elections because it encourages political participation at the grass roots. It becomes an instrument for the mobilization of voters, and each member takes up the responsibility of recruiting new members and of ensuring that people in their household and yard (compound) vote for their party during the election. It is not unusual during election time for the candidate of the constituency of a particular branch to make frequent visits to the branch meetings and to be accompanied by one of the members of the National Executive (usually the Organizing Secretary) who would make speeches on the candidate's behalf. The candidate usually tries to acquaint himself or herself with the members and would be asked to accompany some of the members to their homes to extend contacts with the various neighborhoods. During these periods of electioneering, activity at the branch level is at its highest and there is an increase in the attendance at meetings.

In its campaign activities, success at the branch level can be attested to by the success of the APC during the 1967 national and municipal elections and by the fact that a number of women who stood as APC candidates won seats on the City Council during the municipal elections.

Congress also plays an important part in local politics. Very often, it is women who bring the problems of the locality to the fore by agitating for reform or development either in terms of building more schools in the area, improving sanitation and medical facilities, or protecting market women's interests. In many villages there is a shortage of males, and in some of them women tend to take an active interest in village affairs. In one village, Waterloo, the village head is a woman. Regardless of what party is in power, it is generally felt that participation in a political association, rather than lack of participation and isolation, would bring benefits to the village.

D. Network of Communication

The channels of communication between the leaders and the branches are well maintained through the untiring efforts of the Organizing Secretary. She maintains personal contacts with branches throughout the country and communicates party policies periodically. This way, ideas can percolate through to the rank and file in a more meaningful way and help to give a local reference to national problems. In addition, it promotes a sense of utility in that branches come to recognize and accept their indispensability to the whole network. It is quite common during her visits to branches for the Organizing Secretary to give a briefing on the activities of other branches, especially where information such as this may be of importance to the enhancement of the party's image. This also serves as an incentive to initiate more active programs at the branch level.

The geographical spread of the party has been accelerated during 1969 to 1970. It now has about 27 branches all over the country. Due to the small size of the country it is possible to maintain active channels of communication. The relative ease of transportation makes it possible for the leadership to be in direct touch with the various branches. This facilitates the simultaneous maintenance of a relatively centralized party organization and a steady rate of recruitment. Whenever there is danger of fractionalism, the Organizing Secretary acts as a trouble shooter and restores unity at an opportune time. The system of having resident ministers also serves as a check on party stability, although the resident minister is himself subject to scrutiny

by loyal supporters of the party. Branches in the provinces are required to send a representative once a month to the National Congress meeting in Freetown. This is not consistently or regularly done except when a matter of importance occurs in their towns or villages in the provinces. In such a case, a representative usually comes to give a report, and in cases of urgency action is decided upon by the Executive.

One such incident was a report of a rival party's insurgency in a provincial area in an attempt to gain support of the Congress members. According to the report, members of Congress in this area felt intimidated to such an extent that they ceased their attendance of meetings and the branch's operations had to be suspended. Another report was made of a resident minister who was a former SLPP member and was undermining the APC's interests by soliciting support for the SLPP. In both cases emergency decisions were taken by the Executive. A representative of women was chosen to accompany the visiting member to the President to recount her story. A resolution was subsequently passed calling for the dismissal of the resident minister. The Organizing Secretary suggested a demonstration to support Congress' resolutions and a visit to the provinces for a further investigation of the report.

Through these various links Congress is able to maintain an active as well as a vigilant network of communication. The nature and dynamism of the Organizing Secretary, who makes frequent visits to and addresses the various branches all over the country, provides the most stable means of communication, since these are generated and pivoted around her dynamic personality.

Activities

A. The Convention

The First Convention of Congress was held in 1967 prior to the national general elections. The nine branches in existence at that time were Central I and II, West I and II, East I and II, Kono, Port Loko, and Wilberforce. The majority of these were in the western province. On account of a resolution passed at this Convention to empower the Organizing Secretary to open branches in the provinces, several other branches were subsequently inaugurated in the provinces and the rural areas of Freetown. Consequently, at the Second Convention (scheduled for 7th October to 10th October 1970) there were 25 of the 27 branches represented.

Exhaustive planning was carried out prior to the Convention and a secretariat and various committees were set up by the Working Committee to plan and execute the Convention program. The elaborate division of labor evident in the various committees ensured that all available talent, energy, and resources were utilized. The secretariat chosen to organize the Convention included all the important leaders and relied heavily on the dynamic energy of the "nucleus."

All general planning was under the direction of the secretariat. Specific tasks were designated to the various committees.* An elaborate program was drawn up and full announcements were made in the local press. The radio carried repeated announcements inviting the public to the fee-paying grand ball which was presented as the highlight of the Convention.

The 1970 Convention. The Convention was an important milestone for Congress in that it marked the recognition of its autonomy. Congress was for the first time beginning to rise to a position of prominence and to savor the first tastes of political power as an autonomous female organization. The Convention was therefore planned with great enthusiasm and even though there were signs of the emergence of an underground opposition to the APC, women regarded this period as one of great promise and worked toward the planning and execution of the Convention with optimistic zeal. Some looked forward to it as a great ceremonial occasion and an overdue opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labor during the 1967 election.

The party Conference or Convention as an essential institution for maintaining party unity and strengthening party loyalties was borne out by the 1970 Convention and was particularly relevant at a time when there were indications of underground opposition. Within a short time the opposition had become formalized as the United Democratic Party. This new form of opposition had both constructive and destructive effects on the Convention. On the one hand it presented loyal supporters with a challenge and enabled them to renew their loyalties with added dedication, while on the other it proved destructive in creating a situation of political unrest. This eventually led to the premature termination of the Convention.

Day I. The program commenced with a "march-past" (parade) from the party headquarters to the Town Hall where the Convention was

*See Appendix A for a list and explanation of committees.

being convened. Accompanied by a band, the delegates marched according to their various branches and wore the party colors of white and red: white blouse, red lappa* or skirt, and red and white headties or hats. The majority of delegates had on African dress and wore the APC badge depicting the rising sun and bearing the inscription "Shaki our man." They also carried flags with inscriptions designating their constituency, the party symbol, and slogans. The slogans varied from declaration of party unity and leadership acclaim to the damnation of imperialism. The following were the predominant slogans: "Long live APC," "Long live our Prime Minister," "Long live our Organizing Secretary," "Down with American Imperialism." As the parade proceeded to the Town Hall, the delegates sang songs consisting mostly of party songs, religious chants, and Negro spirituals. The most popular was the party victory song which is a modified revivalist chant:

There is victory for us
There is victory for us
In the struggles of APC
There is victory for us.

The three-day deliberations included speeches, reports, presentation of credentials from overseas delegates, and the passing of resolutions. The delegates were warmly received upon their arrival and were led in marching to their seats. The delegates filled the hall to capacity. There were five official delegates from each constituency and twenty-five constituencies were represented. There was an air of conviviality and it was a colorful occasion of great ceremony. As the delegates awaited the arrival of the Prime Minister they sang songs, clapped their hands, and even danced along the aisles.

The arrival of the Prime Minister was greeted with thunderous cheers. He was led to the platform and joined the other government dignitaries, foreign guests, and members of the Congress Executive. The Assistant Secretary of the Convention secretariat called the Convention to order with the APC shout:

Give us an A,
Give us a P,
Give us a C,
APC. (cheers)

*long wrap

She then asked all present to offer two prayers: one for the Christians and one for the Muslims. The Secretary-General of the Youth League acted as official interpreter.

The first speaker was the Secretary-General of the party, who was also Minister of Finance. The essence of his address was a glowing acclaim for the Congress and for Sierra Leone womanhood: "The contribution of the feminine touch to the efforts of men is indispensable."

Women's electioneering efforts were praised as contributory to the change of party status from an opposition party to a governing party. The involvement of women also helped to awaken a national interest. The Minister pledged financial support in the future for Congress from the parent body as the need arose and outlined recent decisions to help women in two areas: agricultural production and improved transportation. He promised that financial support would always be forthcoming upon request (according to need) and assured them that the policy of the distribution would be egalitarian. He added a plea for the maintenance of law and order and called for dedication, vigilance, and discipline from women. Women were called upon to "tai oja en Enkincha" (symbolic act of female determination)* and mobilize all female energy to forestall the enemies of the state.

The Minister pointed out that the great challenge in the future was the eradication of tribalism and this involved great work and determination. He concluded by wishing them a bright future and success and God's blessing.

The Assistant Secretary gave a vote of thanks and then introduced the Prime Minister, Dr. Siaka Stevens. This introduction was a sonorous tribute to his leadership which ended with an eternal pledge of loyalty: "The man who we will support forever." Amid frenzied cheering from the women, Dr. Stevens rose to address the Convention. He heaped generous praises as well as congratulations on the Women's Congress, and gave a special thanks for their support in enabling him and the party to obtain and remain in power.

Dr. Stevens then warmly welcomed the foreign guests and expressed his honor and the country's honor in having the opportunity of meeting them at this grand occasion. He condemned the present upset in the political life of the country brought about by "power-hungry insurgents." He denounced all forms of violence and power struggles

*Involves tightening the wrap and headtie in a brazen manner.

and asserted that everyone should take their rightful place and await their turn, emphasizing that there was no need to fight in a malignant power struggle: "Pawa nɔ kam bai takiti" (untranslatable into English). Dr. Stevens noted that the world was becoming a smaller place as a result of technological and scientific advances which were binding mankind closer and closer and more and more making us all one humanity.

The President of Congress gave a vote of thanks and the Prime Minister left for another appointment. Congress adjourned shortly after the Prime Minister's departure and the announcement of the afternoon's agenda.

Upon resumption at 4:30 p.m., Mrs. Stella Ralph James gave her address as President of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women.

Address by the National President, Mrs. Stella Ralph James,
at the Opening of the Second Convention
of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women

Honorable Prime Minister, Honorable Members of the Cabinet, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Comrades.

It gives me very great pleasure to be among you on this significant occasion, the Second Convention of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women. I say it is significant because we have been able to stay together as women with determination. We have shown that we are determined to continue to have a regular check upon our activities, as we plan to go on in spite of many obstacles in our way. We are also determined to overcome our differences and use our God-given talents to help build Sierra Leone.

At this stage I turn to our distinguished guests and extend to them a very hearty welcome. I know they will already have had the individual warm welcome on their arrival, and I am simply coordinating it all in a big way by expressing it from this platform. Indeed, on behalf of Congress and in the name of the entire band of women, I say thank you for honoring our invitation. I would ask you to be patient with us in our deliberations, and if we do not rise to your expectations, you will please sympathize with us, as this is our second venture and as such we are still struggling at the beginning. We hope that as and when we call upon you for your contribution to our future progress, you will

readily give us your right hand of fellowship, so that we too can go forward, following your footsteps.

Perhaps I may make bold to say that before long we hope to be a group of women on the world platform, joining forces with our progressive sisters in other countries as we, too, develop.

We have had a wonderful start with our march-past, and from the time we started out from our party headquarters in Westmoreland Street to the Town Hall, we have seen that our community is aware that we are now embarking on another stage in our development. We will be busy within the next few days. I am sure that some of those who have seen us and had not known much about us and our activities will start to ask questions concerning our achievements, and even send us questions about some of their problems. I hope we will be prepared for all of these.

We have the confidence that our Prime Minister has our interest at heart; also, the members of his Cabinet. Their presence amongst us here confirms this. On the whole we appreciate the steps taken by most of our prominent citizens to give us their support, nor do we lack the support of the common man as is demonstrated by our membership.

We are soon to begin the program of this Convention. We have tried to make it possible to include matters of vital importance to our future development, as well as stock-taking of our past. These will be highlighted in the Organizing Secretary's report and through our discussions in general. We realize that we have yet to continue with our work of expansion, because we can regard the demands made on us as the means whereby we feel we are touching the great majority of women throughout our country.

We know as a matter of fact that advanced though some of your countries are, you too must have had your teething troubles; and you can now look back on them with pride and satisfaction that through dint of perseverance you have been able to surmount them.

We women regard ourselves as the pendulum ticking the minutes and hours of the clock face of our government, keeping in mind that our actions can either make or mar our most noble intentions. I will plead, therefore, with members to be ready to cooperate in nation-building in whatever way each of us can.

We cannot all hold the top and very important posts at the same time. We know that some people have good gifts of reasoning, and even though they may not be able to make good long speeches, they can be used in committees. As a member once said, "It is not book-learning that makes sense, rather it was common sense that made the book." We have demonstrated this in some of our programs and in the plans we have made. In short, let us all learn to give and take and wait our turn. I must commend those who have been in office and have helped to keep things together by assisting the various branches and in opening new ones.

Now I commend you all for the work in preparing for this Convention. I pray that God will continue to give us His guidance for the future. He who has been with us in the past will not leave us unless we forget Him and trust in ourselves.

Permit me to make reference to the steps we are taking to keep evergreen the memory of our first Leader and Founder to whom we owe so much. I refer to the late I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and hope that before long we will be able to fulfill our ambition to erect a fitting memorial. By his example we have been given guidelines and know that the way to progress is not easy. In some cases good leaders die before their work is appreciated.

We know that the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women has come to stay, and stay it will. Nevertheless, I shall appeal to all of our representatives here present that when they go back to their various groups to be our mouthpiece--the heralds of our proposals for the future--when they return to their various groups, branches, and constituencies they will, as our messengers, do all in their power to continue to promote peace, unity, and progress.

So Comrades, I say to you, CHEER UP! Hold fast to our motto, FORWARD EVER, BACKWARD NEVER, so that our movement will be second to none in our beloved Sierra Leone.

This address was followed by the Presentation of Credentials, first from the foreign guests, then from the APC Central Committee, the Youth League, and delegations from various branches of Congress participating in the Convention. The order was as follows:

1. Presentation of Credentials of Delegates from the German Democratic Republic by the head of the delegation, Frau Ruth Bornschein.

2. Presentation of Credentials of Delegates from Guinea by the head of the delegation, Madam Tikidankey Suma.
3. Presentation of Credentials of the APC Central Committee Members of APC Youth League.
4. Presentation of Credentials from some of the Congress Delegates.

Day 2 of the Convention commenced one-and-a-half hours later than scheduled. The Organizing Secretary apologized for her late arrival and late start and indicated that some urgent matters had to be settled. Meanwhile, wild rumors about a powerful rival party were spreading. The Convention's convivial atmosphere was transformed to one of anxiety. Tension was in the air and the number of empty seats was an indication of the fear being felt. The Convention, nevertheless, proceeded with the introduction of the Chairman for the day--Madam Yallie Kargbo, who is a Vice-President of Congress.

The Chairman, speaking in Temne and with an interpreter, called the meeting to order and pleaded for unflagging support for the government. She then called on the Organizing Secretary to give her speech. Amid loud cheers and a standing ovation, Mrs. Steele rose to give the following address.

Address of the National Organizing Secretary,
Mrs. Nancy Steele

Madam Chairman, Honorable the Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

A few years ago, my dear Sisters, Sierra Leone Women were not properly united and as such the political and economic development of our country lagged behind. But today, dear Sisters, thanks to the encouragement and help given to us by our beloved Prime Minister and our indefatigable Secretary-General of the All People's Congress, we, the women of Sierra Leone, are united in strength to take our rightful place in the all-round development of our country. We can resolutely assure our leaders and the nation of our whole-hearted support and loyalty. We solemnly pledge to fight with all emphasis at our disposal till every last foreign and local capitalist and their stooges are completely wiped out from our beloved Sierra Leone.

Women must know their responsibility in the home and society.

In these fields the Congress has achieved some progress despite the little setbacks encountered on our way. Before the formation of the Congress, the women of Sierra Leone were not given opportunities to take part fully in the national affairs, but today we are competing side by side with our menfolk.

In 1955 there was only one woman councillor, but today, thanks to the effect of the Organization, we have got five women in the City Council, and we are determined that in the forthcoming general elections Sierra Leone women will make history by demanding their rights to be elected into parliament. For it is but right that women should take part in the drafting and implementing of all legislations which effect them in the society to which they belong.

In my capacity as National Organizing Secretary of the Congress, I feel duty bound to report on the organizational program carried out so far. Firstly, the real organization of the Congress dates back to 1967 when we held our first historic Convention. At that Convention only nine branches participated. They were Central I and II, West I and II, East I and II, Kono, Port Loko (South-West), and Wilberforce.

Foreign guests were invited from the Republic of Guinea and the USSR. At this Convention a resolution was unanimously taken and adopted that the Organizing Secretary assume full responsibility to open branches in the provinces. I am happy to state that I carried out this duty as far as was humanly possible. Branches have now been opened in the following districts and rural areas: Kissy, Regent, Koya and York Districts, Kono, Bo, Kailahun and Makeni, and many other districts and rural areas will follow.

I am also happy to report that the Congress has participated in various International Conferences. To mention a few: the Conference of the Women's Committee in the GDR; the World Conference of Women held in Helsinki; and the Non-aligned Conference held in Zambia.

The National Congress has also participated in the United Nations Assembly and the Independence Celebrations of Jamaica. The following members attended: Berlin--Mrs. Sarah Williams, Secretary Ward II, and myself; Helsinki--Mrs. Sarah Williams and myself; Zambia--Madam Binti Kuharta, Chairman, Bo; United Nations--myself; Jamaica--Madam Mamie Hafner, Secretary, Kono, Mrs. Koroma, Makeni.

In August this year, Mrs. Marie Kanu and myself accepted the

kind invitation to visit the Republic of China. We found this visit very useful and interesting. Our President and Mrs. Kadie Tarrawally also accepted the kind invitation of the German African Friendship Society, GDR, to participate in a study tour.

Taking part in the Council Meeting of the WIDF now in Hungary is our beloved Secretary-General, Mrs. Princess Gibson-Bucknor. We wish this Council Meeting well and we give our support to all the resolutions that will be adopted.

The Congress has always demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate its solidarity to our government. Dear Sisters of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women, dear Sisters of the Republic of Guinea, dear Sisters of the GDR, let us console ourselves with the responsibilities of bringing up our children to be progressive and better citizens of our respective countries. We shall fight for the liberation of all countries under capitalists and imperialists, exploitation and oppression. We shall fight also against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination. Women of the world, unite to fight for the total emancipation of women.

Let me, as National Organizing Secretary on behalf of the Congress, take this opportunity to thank the Soviet Women's Committee for the help they have given us in the field of scholarships and materials. We assure them that we shall never forget their kindness. We call on all progressive women's organizations to give us help in our fields of development, so that we can take our rightful place amongst women of the world.

LONG LIVE WOMEN OF THE WORLD!

Thank you.

When the loud applause finally died down, the Chair thanked Mrs. Steele for her speech and then invited delegates to resume the presentation of credentials and the branch reports. The order of presentation given in the program could not be strictly adhered to because of the absence of some delegations. One delegation, for instance, had stayed away because of the death of one of their members.

The general format was for each branch to renew its support, endorse the leadership, give a brief report of the history of the branch and its activities, outline its specific problems with the hope of

soliciting help for developing its area, and renew its pledge of loyalty for the party. The reports were in the main presented by the branch secretaries. The following are three examples of the branch reports given at the Convention.

Central I Constituency: Branch Report.

Dear Sisters,

Allow me on behalf of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women Central I Branch to extend our sincere greetings and gratitude, first of all to our guests and our sisters from far away who are here to join us in this our Second National Delegates Conference and also to all delegates participating. We welcome them wholeheartedly and we wish that at the end of this historic Conference they will take back pleasant memories.

We would like to extend our grateful thanks to our beloved Prime Minister, our able Secretary-General of the All People's Congress, and to the Central Committee of the party who have helped in no small measure by encouraging Sierra Leone women to take active part in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of our dear country.

May I take this opportunity as Secretary of my branch to acquaint you with our struggles for national independence and complete emancipation of Sierra Leone women.

For more than fifteen years now the capitalists and our own local reactionaries have been trying to sabotage our hard-won independence. Right now they are engaged in all wild and vicious propaganda against the progressive and legitimate government of Sierra Leone, headed by our most beloved Prime Minister, Dr. Siaka Stevens.

We, the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women, are dedicated to fight with all the might at our disposal and with every means available to liquidate all foreign capitalists and the local stooges in order to build a country united in strength, thereby insuring that our children in future will enjoy a prosperous and peaceful life.

We the women of Sierra Leone cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings of our African sisters who are still waging relentless struggles against all forms of foreign aggression and exploitation and their right to self-determination.

Today we pay tribute to our heroic sisters in South Africa,

Namibia, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, and to all our sisters in America who oppose all forms of racial discrimination.

We pledge our support both morally and materially, we call on all African heads of state through the Organization of African Unity to take positive steps to give more financial and military aid to all fighters, as we feel that as long as any inch of African soil remains under foreign domination the independence of African states cannot be guaranteed.

The Central I Ward Branch solemnly promises all foreign delegates and observers and women of the world that we will resolutely push forward our struggles against all forms of foreign interference into our national politics. To our own local imperialist stooges, your days are numbered.

Finally, to our Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet: Push forward, rid our beloved country of all foreign and local stooges. The women of Sierra Leone are resolutely behind you.

Once more, on behalf of our branch, we welcome you, all our sisters, particularly our own kith and kin, our sisters from Guinea. Long live our beloved Prime Minister, long live our Secretary-General of the All People's Congress, long live the APC, and long live the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women.

Central II Constituency: Branch Report.

Honorable Prime Minister, Your Worship (Mayor), Executive Members of the All People's Congress, Distinguished and Foreign Guests, Fellow Comrades.

We of the Central II Constituency feel very proud and full of joy as we celebrate the second anniversary of our Convention. This really indicates that the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women is fully aware of what it stands for and is really determined to make Sierra Leone a country worthy of its name, ideal, and admiration.

Our branch of the Congress was officially opened in June, 1970, amidst great struggle and determination. The delay was due to the division in the Constituency. Despite all our efforts, some of the women refuse to unite. This blame I lay squarely on the shoulders of our representative who, I think, has not explained Article 15 of the Constitution of the party to them. Nevertheless, we are striving hard

to achieve our goal and are really in sympathy with them. We do hope that before long they will rectify their mistake as we still give them open arms. Our worthy Prime Minister, "Pa Shaki" as he is familiarly called, is our chosen leader by God, and we want to assure all and sundry that by God's grace, since he has the cooperation of the women and youths with God ahead, he stands firm as the rock which naught can move. The waves may roar and toss, the billows beat high, but behind the shadow stands God Almighty keeping watch among His own. Never yet in the political history of Sierra Leone has a party risen with such awareness of the country's responsibilities by her womenfolk, as is the pattern of the All People's Congress today.

Indeed, we do at this moment remember a worthy son of the soil, Mr. I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson of blessed memory, who first introduced politics in this country by forming the Youth League some years ago, and who was also very thoughtful when the APC's Constitution was being drawn up to give the women a place and the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women. May God grant him eternal rest and his soul rest in perfect peace. May we rise for a minute's silence. "Lives of great men all remind us/ we can make our lives sublime, / and departing leave behind us/ footprints on the sands of time." Women of Sierra Leone, rise up and enjoy this noble example. Never play the part of cowards. Strive on till you achieve your God-given rights. We thank the Prime Minister and his Cabinet for the chance given to some of the women to prove their mettle and have voted five of them into the municipality of Freetown. We hope it will not be long before we will be boasting of women in the Cabinet. The men have nothing to fear and we honor the words of the Prime Minister: "Eternal vigilance is the price we have to pay for our liberty." We are the watchdogs of the country.

We welcome all foreign and other delegates and hope they will be inspired by our activities so that they take back happy memories of us.

May God bless us all.

Long live our Leader and Sierra Leone in general.

Forward ever. Backward never.

East I Constituency: Branch Report.

On behalf of the East I Constituency we extend our greetings to our Sisters from the provinces and neighboring countries and also from Europe.

Our branch of Congress was officially opened on the 13th November 1968, with 70 members on roll. I am happy to say that there are now 200 members on roll.

Activities. During the past year the Congress has been very active and we were able to make several visits: (1) visits were made to the Mental Home and also Children's Home and gifts were presented to them; (2) our Organizing Secretary, together with the National Organizing Secretary, visited Germany.

We had a luncheon sale and had a handsome profit of which we were able to give to the Central Body twenty pounds [sterling].

Organization. We in our own little group are trying to bring all tribes together so that through our effort we can raise the standard of womanhood in our country, and also bring about unity in this our beloved country. This you can see by the number now on roll.

Dead. We are really sorry to report the death of one of our able workers, Mrs. Ina Mason, which took place in April this year. May her soul rest in peace.

Conclusion. Last but not least on behalf of the East I Constituency we pledge our loyal support to our Honorable Prime Minister and members of Cabinet and promise to uphold his hands until we achieve our goal by the help of the Almighty.

The Secretary's report was then read* and debated. The following is the text of her report.

General Report of the National Congress of
Sierra Leone Women
Activities 1968-1970

Introduction. Honorable Prime Minister, Ministers of Government, Fellow Comrades, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of National Congress of Sierra Leone Women I welcome you all most sincerely to this Second Convention today. We must remember now and at all times the untiring support which this

*By a deputy for the Secretary-General who was at a council meeting in Hungary.

Congress has given to the All People's Congress, and I make bold to say that had it not been for the oneness and unity of the National Congress the party would not have been as it is today, and moreover most of us would not have been here today.

For those of our absentee members and supporters when you return home, please assure them of the special place they occupy in our hearts. Whilst we are gathered at this Convention, let us remember those of our comrades: (1) who have died through natural causes; (2) who lost their lives as a result of the Army Coup in 1967. May I beg you that we observe a minute's silence to their memory. [All stand] "We remember them--may God's perpetual light shine on them."

Since our last Convention the Congress has been doing its utmost best to bring peace and happiness into this our beloved country, and we have continued to show responsibility and exemplary behavior in all works of life. We must continue to discourage violence or unconstitutional action, show implicit confidence in the Rule of Law, continue to love, cherish, and maintain the high ideas of the party, regardless of our detractors' unseemingly remarks.

The National Congress is the women's wing of the All People's Congress. It was formed in 1961 to bring together all progressive women of Sierra Leone regardless of tribe, religion, or class.

Even though our leaders were subjected to many trials and tribulations, we were never disheartened but rather spurred to greater determination which has now borne fruit, because we believe that our cause was just and right, and will prevail against might however long and arduous the path may be. For example, our Organizing Secretary, Mrs. Nancy Steele, was detained at Pademba Road Prison and lost her mother whilst she was detained.

The Congress fought desperately in the 1967 general election and through its efforts the APC won the election, although the Army seized power and declared martial law after the appointment and swearing of our leader [Dr. Siaka Stevens].

Women who went up to Tower Hill to oppose the Juxon-Smith military seizure of power were brutally beaten and molested; some of them were maimed and some died in the process.

The National Congress took active part in the return to civilian rule in 1968 when the beloved leader of our party was again appointed Prime Minister thanks to our efforts.

City Council Elections. For the first time in the history of Freetown, as many as five women, all members of the National Congress, have been elected councillors of the Freetown City Council and Mrs. Nancy Steele elected an Alderman. This shows that the APC knows no discrimination.

Growth. The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women continued to grow steadily. There are branches in East I and II Constituencies, Central I and II Constituencies, West I and II Constituencies, Kissy Rural Area, Wilberforce Rural Area, Koya Constituency, Makeni Constituency, Port Loko S.W. Constituency, and Bo Constituency.

The following constituencies are in the pipeline: Kenema, Kono, Moyamba and Koinadugu.

Officers of Congress are: Mrs. Stella Ralph James, President; Madam Yalie Kargbo, Vice-President; Mrs. P. Gibson-Bucknor, Secretary-General; Mrs. C. A. Jones-Newland, Assistant Secretary; Mrs. Nancy Steele, Organizing Secretary; Mrs. M. A. Harper, Social Secretary; Mrs. Marie Kanu, Assistant Social Secretary; Madam Fudia Turay, Assistant Organizing Secretary; Mrs. F. B. Turay, Treasurer; Madam Yallie Samura, Political Adviser; Mrs. S.A.T. Koroma, Propaganda Secretary.

International Activities. Members of the Congress have participated in the following Overseas Conferences: The World Congress of Women in Helsinki, the United Nations General Assembly, the Republic of Zambia, the German Democratic Republic, the Republic of Gambia, the United Soviet Socialist Republic. Even at this moment the National Secretary-General of the Congress, Mrs. Princess Gibson-Bucknor, is attending a conference in Hungary.

Congress also has a Working Committee comprising the following: Mrs. C. A. Jones-Newland, Secretary; Miss D. Dove-Edwin, Assistant Secretary; Mrs. Daisy Bona, Publicity Secretary; Mrs. F. B. Turay, Treasurer; Mrs. M. A. Harper, Social Secretary; Mrs. M. Kanu, Assistant Social Secretary; Mrs. Fudia Turay, Assistant Organizing Secretary. All Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries of the various constituencies are members of the Working Committee.

Celebrations. In February this year Congress celebrated its 9th anniversary with a mass rally at the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Dr. Siaka Stevens. Speakers at the rally were the Secretary-General of the party, Mr. C. A. Kamara-Taylor; the President of the National Congress of Sierra Leone

Women, Mrs. Stella Ralph James; and His Excellency Mr. Kojo Randall, Sierra Leone's new Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana.

Scholarship. Congress has sponsored eight girls presently studying in the USSR and GDR.

Guests. Our First Convention in 1968 was attended by guests from the Soviet Women's Committee and Sisters from the Republic of Guinea.

Visitors from Abroad. Mrs. Charlene Mitchell from the USA, Mrs. Florence Mophosho from South Africa, and Mrs. Simulkai from Zambia addressed Women of the National Congress at an extraordinary meeting of Congress held at the Town Hall in July.

Congress is appealing to all progressive-thinking women, young and old, to unite under one banner so as to become a strong force with the aim of claiming for the women of Sierra Leone their rightful place in the service and leadership of the nation alongside our menfolk. As a nation cannot rise above its womanhood, so also is a nation's struggle not beyond the capabilities of its women.

Women in other countries, such as Algeria, Vietnam, the Congo, the Middle East, and Guinea-Bissau, have participated actively in the struggle for the liberation of their countries, up to the point of physical combat. If the women of Sierra Leone were to emulate this example, we shall indeed have advanced in no small measure the national struggle for peace, progress, and economic and social advancement.

Discussion on the report and on other matters of Congress was resumed in the afternoon. Several points of grievance within Congress were aired. There was a tendency for some of these grievances to be expressed in quarrelsome tones and the atmosphere was therefore one of dissension. The main complaint centered on ethnic conflicts,⁵ especially where these affected religion or culture.

Conflicts of Traditions. Some Creole members who are Christians appealed to the Organizing Secretary to try making a plea that would end the loud drumming of the [traditional] secret societies on Sundays, especially during the hours of Christian worship and within hearing distance of churches. Secret societies are closed societies into which women of some ethnic groups enter and undergo initiation rites into womanhood. At the end of these rites, a coming-out ceremony, "pul bondo," is usually performed. This involves a street parade of the

new initiates who are uniformly dressed and followed by a group of older women also uniformly dressed ("asuobi"). The parade is usually accompanied by drumming, singing, and dancing, which do not seem to blend very smoothly with choral music.

Temne women reacted strongly to this demand and declared their right to conduct their traditional ceremonies as they pleased. They felt that Creole women had no right to interfere in concerns of a tribal secret society and that all people should be able to perform their traditional ceremonies wheresoever and whensoever they wished.

A verbal brawl ensued between the two camps. The Organizing Secretary appealed for cooperation and respect for each other's traditions. Some Temne delegates felt it was a matter that could not be discussed in an open Convention of this type by non-members and would hear no more of it. The atmosphere of dissension increased and debate on the matter had to be suspended.

As this event indicates, ethnicity, religion, and ritual play an important part in the lives of the various groups in Sierra Leone and often invoke intense emotional reactions when areas of sensitivity are discussed. Politicians thrive on the ability of being able to manipulate these sentiments for support.

Day 3. The third day of the Convention was the day for elections and the passing of resolutions. Attendance was very poor because of the mounting political unrest brought about by the reputedly violent tactics adopted by the new opposition party. Some of the members of the leadership were engaged in emergency consultations with the government and only two attended the sessions. It was reported that government ministers had been physically assaulted in their offices by the new party insurgents and that some arrests had been made. Some women were frightened of the possibility of being taken as hostages because of their affiliation with the party.

The Convention reelected virtually the same officers and after a short break the resolutions were hurriedly read and passed by the Resolutions Committee.*

The dance scheduled for Saturday was cancelled and the meeting ended by the dwindling away of delegates during the reading of the resolutions.

*See Appendix B for Resolutions.

Evaluation of the Convention. Because of political unrest in the country and the premature termination of the Convention, success was only partially achieved. The Convention, nevertheless, was of some value to the different participating groups. For the party leadership it offered an opportunity to enhance their status. It reaffirmed their authority and the various eulogies to the Organizing Secretary served to endorse her supremacy in Congress. The general leadership shared this same endorsement in some measure and this is attested to by the fact that the leadership was reelected.

For the rank and file the Convention offered an opportunity to establish contact with the rest of the Congress and the central body of the party. It encouraged the feeling of unity and gave an opportunity to report on their particular branch activities. It also provided an avenue for communication, for soliciting help for local problems, and for airing grievances. The foreign guests gave the convention an international dimension through alliances and ideological support from women in other parts of the world.

Apart from these manifest functions of the Convention, its latent functions at least at the earlier stages were as important. First, it afforded delegates an opportunity for a unique experience in political participation. Second, the Convention as a form of social involvement was partly celebratory. Consequently women tend to view their participation in party politics from two perspectives. On the one hand it is seen as a political exercise and on the other as a ceremonial occasion for merrymaking. The Convention in its early stages reflected this second perspective more profoundly than the first.

B. Constitutional Change and Militancy

As will be demonstrated in this section, the militancy and dynamism of Congress have contributed in no small measure to the consolidation of the party's position of political dominance. Mobilization for party support has been actively pursued by Congress in its various activities, ranging from constitutional action to violence. These activities include political rallies, conventions, public meetings, campaigns, protesting by delegation and by demonstrations, and inaugurating a female militia. Congress represents one of the most active sections of the party. The other group comprising strong political activists is the Youth League. The central party is on the whole more involved with affairs of government than with recruitment or mobilization.

As a result of the activities of Congress, women have become

identified with political influence (in spite of the fact that the only female parliamentary representatives are chiefs) because of their role as political activists. They push forward imminent government policies by agitating and demonstrating in favor of these policies before they are introduced by the government. Through these actions they receive full press coverage and that often serves as a test of public opinion. Congress' militancy has a tactical and strategical aspect. It plays an experimental role by acting as testing ground and shock absorber for imminent constitutional governmental policies which can be construed as radical. The policies are often phrased as "demands" by the women which have to be met so that women will be placated. The following is an example of the press coverage received after the rally to demand the declaration of a republic.

At a rally, Mrs. Nancy Steele, Organizing Secretary of the APC women's section, said that if Mr. Stevens did not declare a republic on April 27, the women of Sierra Leone would do it for him. [The women paraded through the streets of Freetown on the following day to present a seven-point resolution to the Premier calling for a republic "without further delay."] The Agricultural Minister [later to become the Prime Minister and Vice-President], Mr. Sorie Koroma, had promised the meeting amid wild cheers, "We shall give you a republic shortly."

[West Africa, April 4, 1971]

Sierra Leone became a republic on April 21st, 1971.

Militancy, in the sense of aggressive political behavior and even violence, has featured in activities of Congress. The founders of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women are radical politicians in terms of their left-wing proclivities, and under the leadership of Mrs. Steele this radicalism has flourished. It is generally believed that Mrs. Steele's several visits to Communist and Socialist countries help to sustain this radical fervor, and she has often declared her training in revolutionary tactics. In addressing a meeting on the need for a disciplined female militia she announced, "I have been trained as a soldier a long time ago." In some ways this training is borne out in activities of Congress, especially where these activities are militant. Mrs. Steele often insists that the country needs tough governmental measures in order to instill the discipline evident in countries such as Guinea, Algeria, and China.

Congress often calls on the government to use tougher measures

in instituting law and order in the country. The tactic often employed is one which threatens the reversal of the traditional roles of male dominance. It is often implied that by refusing to use tougher measures men are at risk of losing their position of dominance. Women threaten to assume this position by a declaration of their willingness to institute tougher measures. They hope that this will incite the men to act if they do not wish to be supplanted. Congress' militancy has bordered on violence on several occasions as the following incidents indicate.

1. Challenging the soldiers in 1967. The first act within the orbit of violence was in 1967 when the APC had won the elections but was prevented from assuming power on account of two coups d'etat. Shortly after that Mrs. Steele led the women of Congress in a militant protest demonstration against military rule and urged a return to civilian rule under the APC. These protesting women confronted the soldiers and were ordered to disperse. Their resistance to these orders led to violent reactions from the soldiers. Some of the women were wounded in the skirmishes that resulted and Mrs. Steele among others was arrested and held in detention for nine months.

2. Forestalling the new opposition. The second set of activities consisted of a series of militant demonstrations against the new opposition party--the United Democratic Party. The threat posed to the government by this new extra-parliamentary opposition party led to the declaration of a state of emergency in September, 1970, and on October 8th the government banned the new party. In a broadcast message that day the Prime Minister attributed this move to the "wave of violence" which had been taking place in the country since the formation of the new United Democratic Party. Tough measures against certain elements by a joint army-police operation were ordered by the government.

Three days later the women of Congress and members of the Youth League organized demonstrations in support of the government's ban. Within a few days the leaders of the banned party and some of their supporters were arrested and detained. The Daily Mail, the government-supported national newspaper, reported the incident on October 12th:

The government's recent stern measures to curb political unrest and violence in the country was greeted with a spontaneous solidarity march by thousands in Freetown on Saturday.

With banners and placards they marched from the west end of Freetown through the main streets of Freetown

and called on the Prime Minister, Dr. Siaka Stevens, at his office.

Some of the inscriptions on the banners read "Long live our Prime Minister," "APC now or never" and "We look forward to the Republic quickly."

The people thanked the Prime Minister and his cabinet for the prompt action taken in banning the newly-formed United Democratic Party (UDP) and the detention of its leaders.

They pledged their support to the APC and government and called on the government to continue its good work for the nation and people.

Addressing the crowd which included men, women, and youths, the Prime Minister thanked them for their support and loyalty to the party and government. Party supporters, Dr. Stevens said, should be law abiding and fight for the party.

Amidst deafening cheers of "APC, APC" the Prime Minister declared, "If we are disturbed, we will defend ourselves."

3. Violence in Court. The next dramatic event was in response to an abortive coup alleged to have been planned for October 13th. The following day Congress staged a militant and violent demonstration in front of the law courts building against the issuing of writs of habeas corpus on behalf of the six detainees (former leaders of the banned UDP). These detainees were considered responsible for the political unrest and the abortive coup. The Daily Mail for October 15th reported the incident:

There were demonstrations against the actions yesterday, and members and supporters of the Women's Congress marched through the precincts of the Courts with banners and slogans. Lawyers making the applications were booed.

An independent daily paper, Unity, on October 15th carried the following report below a picture of Congress women protesting in front of the court:

The protesters claimed that the trials were unlawful and that the accused were guilty, and stormed the courts. The lawyer presenting the writ of habeas corpus on behalf of Dr. Easmon, one of the detainees alleged to be a supporter of UDP, was attacked. His gown was torn, and his mother was accused of possessing kɔkɔ, the witch bird.

4. Anti-American Demonstration. On October 15th, following reports of the arrest of six soldiers involved in an attempted coup and the discovery of 650 rounds of ammunition stolen from the military barracks and abandoned at a playing field, another Congress demonstration was staged. This time the target was the American Embassy. A news item was reported on the radio at 1:00 p.m. on October 15th:

Today a crowd of hundreds of people, most of them women, protested in front of the American Embassy against American intervention in Sierra Leone's internal politics. They carried banners with inscriptions like "Down with American Imperialism" and threw stones and eggs at the American Embassy.

The Daily Mail report for October 16th under the front page headline "Crowds Demonstrate against U.S. Embassy" read:

The American flag was pulled down and torn into pieces when supporters of the All People's Congress and members of various organizations staged a massive demonstration against the activities of Embassy Officials in Sierra Leone's politics.

The demonstrators carrying several placards had just reached outside the Embassy, when one of the leaders of the organizations, Mr. Monty Cole, went to the flag-pole at the Embassy, climbed the pole and pulled down the flag. He had just taken the flag to the other demonstrators when it was snatched from him and torn to pieces. The Embassy's show window was damaged.

The demonstrations comprised members of the APC Youth League, National Youth Movement, Peace Council of Sierra Leone, National Congress of Sierra Leone Women, Sierra Leone's Korea Friendship Society and National Solidarity Committee.

The leaders of the organizations were Mrs. Nancy Steele, Mrs. H. R. S. Bultman, Mr. Monty Cole, and Mr. Kojo Randall, Sierra Leone's High Commissioner to Ghana.

Police prevented the demonstrators from going into the offices of the SLST and the British High Commission.

Some of the placards carried by demonstrators read:
"America is responsible for the world's unrest,"
"Peace corps or CIA agents, Sierra Leone will win,"
"Victory for African unity," "Down with American Imperialism," "Go, go Americans, we want peace in S. L.," "Give Siaka a chance to rule," "Long live our dear Prime Minister."

The APC official weekly paper, We Yone, also carried full coverage of these events declaring support for the government's actions. During the next few months there was a relative calm, but the country continued to observe the state of emergency.

5. Women's Volunteer Force. The major event that led to the most militant action of Congress was the attempted assassination of the Prime Minister on March 21st, 1971. This time Congress' reaction was to incorporate a female militia within its ranks. Inspiration for its formation was not new since the leadership of Congress had always been impressed by the women's militia in Guinea and had been making plans for instituting a similar female corps in Sierra Leone.

Congress maintains a close alliance with Guinea as does the APC. The government has a defense pact with Guinea and various forms of cultural and political exchange are made through the allied organizations of the party. During the foreign (Portuguese) attack on Guinea by alleged mercenary troops, the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women and the Youth League issued a joint statement in support of President Sekou Touré and his government and denounced the aggression as being imperialistically inspired. The events of March 21st accelerated these plans for a female militia and on May 29th, 1971, the Women's Volunteer Force was inaugurated. Its aims were "to defend the country and to protect our Prime Minister." The following were the military officers: Leader-General, Mrs. Nancy Steele; Deputy Leader-General, Mrs. Daisy Bona; Force Major, Mrs. Hannah Dean.

On the day of its inauguration at a public ceremony, thirty

volunteers in military uniform paraded in a military drill under the command of the Deputy Leader-General. The Force Major revealed to me later that the military uniforms of the officers had been made in Guinea. A large proportion of the volunteers were between the ages of 35 and 50. In an interview after the ceremony most volunteers reported that their reasons for joining stemmed from the attacks made on the president's life and the general political unrest in the country. They felt that they should be prepared to defend the country should any further threats be made on its security. One of the volunteers declared: "We are prepared to shoot a gun to kill if attacked. We must be all able to protect our country and children."*

6. Supporting the Executions. Some of the officers responsible for the assassination attempts on the president were tried by court-martial, found guilty, and sentenced to death. They were hanged in the early hours of the morning of 29th June 1971. The news broadcast which carried this bulletin left the country stunned, as this was the first legal political execution in the country.

Congress planned and staged a massive demonstration the next day in support of the executions. The Daily Mail for 30th June reported under the front page headline, "Crowds Demonstrate in Support of Executions":

Large crowds yesterday morning braved the heavy rains to demonstrate their support for the government following the execution of Brigadier John Bangura and three other officers following the verdict and sentence of the court-martial.

The demonstration was organized by the members of the NCSLW** and the National Y. L.***

The crowds cheered the President at the State House and the Forces Commander, Colonel J.S. Momoh, was also cheered when he arrived and left the State House.

Some of the banners exhibited by the demonstrators who

*Only the Leader-General, Mrs. Steele, was carrying a revolver at the inaugural parade.

**Congress.

***Youth League.

marched through the streets of Freetown read:
"Sierra Leone or Death, we shall conquer," "The
National Congress demands immediate public
execution of all traitors," "The NC supports the
verdict of the court-martials," "The People's voice--
Bangura Traitor No. 1," "Long live the Republic of
S. L.," "Long live the APC," "Long live the President
Siaka Stevens," "Civilians connected with the coup
attempts must be executed."

The crowds, which were led by Alderman Nancy
Steele, were singing "Since I joined the APC, I never
disappointed one day."*

In a brief address, the President, Dr. Siaka Stevens,
thanked them for the demonstration.

Dr. Stevens asked them as members of the party to
set an example of law and order, without which there
would be nothing good. He asked them to return home
quietly after their demonstration. The other officers
executed yesterday morning were Major S. E. Momoh,
Major F. L. Jawara, and Lieutenant J. B. S. Kolugbornga.

After these executions the APC seemed to have finally
consolidated itself in an unchallenged position. The "enemies" had been
averted, "traitors" had been killed, and a certain amount of fear had
been instilled in a nation relatively unused to violence. For those who
had supported the APC, and even for those who had not, it became
necessary to "demonstrate" this support. The attendance of women at
a Congress meeting held on the 4th July was the largest I had ever seen.
Over 500 women were present.

At this stage we should perhaps reexamine the following
statement by Hodgkin, a pioneer in the study of African political parties.

The use of violence in domestic politics has

*Freely adapted from a revivalist "shout":

I never disappointed one day--
Never disappointed one day
Since I joined the army of the Lord
I never disappointed one day.

attraction primarily for opposition parties and unreconciled minorities, for whom electoral techniques offer little prospect for securing power or changing the character of the state.⁶

We have already seen that the use of violence is not restricted to parties in opposition. Sometimes parties in power use violence to consolidate their position. We have yet to see whether the new methods of centralization by the APC will instigate a chain reaction and produce yet again and again and again the kind of violent opposition about which Hodgkin wrote.

This section poses certain analytical problems which, as I have indicated, will be dealt with in another publication. In particular, the whole question of the meaning of militancy will be explored, the main problem being whether certain overt acts of support of a regime can be regarded as militant if militancy is seen as acts which place demands on a regime.

C. Political Education and Propaganda

Speeches by Mrs. Steele. A large amount of propaganda and political education is conveyed through the speeches of Mrs. Steele at general meetings and mass rallies. It is also largely through these speeches and through the speeches of other members of the leadership nucleus, especially the Propaganda Secretary, that party policies and directives are communicated. In the main the speeches serve to mobilize party rank and file and recruit members. Consequently they are emotionally charged, powerfully delivered, idiomatic, loaded with political slogans and propaganda, and intended to sway the masses. Certain themes appear consistently in these speeches: appeals to womanhood, promises of a better life through national unity, denunciation of dissident elements, and appeals to God.

The following is part of a speech delivered by Mrs. Steele at a general meeting and gives an example of the type of appeal constantly made to women.

Women are the rightful owners of the country.
We give birth to men so in a way we own them.
If women stand united, only good can come out
of it. Sierra Leone belongs to us. If it is

undone, women will suffer most. We have the children to worry about. Men can run away from trouble, but women have to look behind for the children.

National Unity is another recurring theme in the speeches and tends to be stressed more during periods of political unrest. The following extracts from speeches of Mrs. Steele best sums up this emphasis on national unity.

We are all one people. There should be no tribalism in this party. This is the party for everybody--rich, poor, literates, illiterates, men and women. It is the party for all nations [ethnic groups].

By uniting among ourselves within the party, we will be able to attract others to its membership and as a result have national unity. It will look very attractive from the outside and others will want to share in our solidarity.

Usai shuga de, yoni go kam de!
Sai we awujɔde, yuba go kam!*

National unity is intended to convey, in essence, unity through the APC. Consequently there is a great deal of party propaganda involved in the theme of national unity.

The APC has done a lot of good for the country. It has done a lot for children. The APC brought back the march-past** and school meals. Children praise the APC, women have been helped by the APC. It was the APC that made women politically aware and informed them about their rights. The APC includes women in all of its programs.

*Krio proverbs: "Where there is sugar, ants will be attracted. Where there is an awujɔ feast, vultures will be present."

**An annual parade of school children involving a salute to the Head of State who stands on the dais at Brookfields Stadium during the ceremony.

Much disunity is blamed on tribalism since the Congress takes a strong stand against tribalism. This stand is best illustrated in Mrs. Steele's denunciation of dissident elements.

Tribalism is the main cause of political unrest. Look at the Congo. That was one country destroyed by tribalism. We better watch out and fight against it in Sierra Leone. We will challenge those who wish to use tribalism as a weapon. We will write against them and bring about their downfall. We must look out for elements of disunity in our midst and wipe them out. Traitors will be found out. We must guard against gossiping and quarrelling-- the curse of women. We must always have frank discussions and this way you know who is friend or foe. Tel fren tru nɔ pwel fren.*

Appeals to the Deity. Congress meetings always commence with the saying of prayers. A Muslim prayer (El Fatha) and a Christian prayer (the Lord's Prayer) are always said by members at the beginning of every meeting. Numerous references are also made to God in the speeches and there is always an expression of belief in the destiny of the APC to rule.

What is destined by God for you will be yours regardless of obstacles. God will deliver the APC from this period of unrest and threats. God will deliver the country.

During the meeting of October 5th there was a great deal of tension and fear expressed by some of the members because of the rumors of the great threats from the new party, the UDP. To allay their fears, members were asked by Mrs. Steele to rise and offer special prayers to God. The El Fatha and the 23rd Psalm were said. Mrs. Steele then prayed extemporaneously in the following revivalist manner:

Our sweet Lord, we call on you to deliver
this country from chaos.
[Chorus -- Amen]
We call on you to deliver the APC from its

*Krio proverb: "Truth does not destroy friendship."

enemies and let it stand victorious.

[Amen]

Give us strength to fight our enemies.

[Amen]

Renew our strength we pray thee and guide
us with thy loving kindness and mercy.

[Amen]

Political Education. Most of the political education is in the form of political propaganda. Constitutional changes are often explained to members in a way that may be described as propaganda. For example, the questionnaires issued to all Sierra Leoneans in order to determine the nature of the Republican constitution (whether Sierra Leone should have an executive or ceremonial president) were presented to Congress members in the following manner:

We demand a republic with an executive president. It is dangerous to have a ceremonial president and a strong prime minister. You are splitting power leaving the state open to unrest. Take the case of the Congo. Both Kasavubu and Tshombe had enough power, hence both sacked each other. Anyway the decision will be given by a referendum. That is why we have given you these questionnaires to fill out. Those who cannot read or write will get help in filling them out. Remember it is better that power is well balanced in one person. Luk wata luk Flawa.
Yu mix am gud, i gud fɔ yusef. Yu mix am bad,
i bad fɔ yusef.*

Socialist and Communist Influences. Congress receives several invitations from time to time from Communist and Socialist countries to attend women's conferences or for social visits. The majority of these conferences and meetings are of a political nature. Reports to Congress upon the return of the delegates are often presented in the form of propaganda and political education. They highlight the efforts of women in these countries in building their nations and in being involved in political participation. These women are often presented as being more suitable for emulation than women in the West. The following is a report

*"Here's water, and here's flour. If you mix it well, it will be good for you. If you mix it badly, it will be bad for you." Mrs. Nancy Steele's speech delivered at a National Congress Meeting, August 31st, 1970.

by a delegate to a conference in China. It was presented at a National Congress meeting upon her return home.

The people in China are very united. The majority of them are farmers and are very hard-working. Women work as volunteers on the farms after finishing their domestic tasks. Women in China are very hard-working. The Chinese people do not look down on menial work. In Sierra Leone you are ridiculed when you perform menial work. We should unite and be more hard-working like the Chinese people.

Chinese people are very friendly and like people of our color. On our way back we stopped in London and stayed for a while. What a difference! They do not like people of our color in London. The English do not like black people. We were treated badly in London unlike the nice treatment we received in China. People in Sierra Leone should copy the life of the Chinese and take them as our example.

The Use of Mass Media. The APC party newspaper, We Yone, is edited by Mrs. P. Gibson-Bucknor, Secretary of Congress. Much of its content is political propaganda, and Socialist writings feature in many issues. The Sierra Leone Daily Mail, the pro-establishment paper, also carries the Socialist writings of the Korean political philosopher, Kim Il Sung, from time to time, as well as editorials supporting the government or praising the activities of Congress. In addition, the press is often used by Congress to enhance the image of Congress, to challenge a threat, or as an instrument of propaganda and political education. The following extracts illustrate the various uses of the press by Congress, Daily Mail, December 22, 1970.

Message to women:

The President of the Sierra Leone Women's Congress, [sic] Mrs. Stella Ralph James, has sent the following message:

As President of the SLWC it gives me much pleasure to send a Christmas message through the columns of this journal. By the grace of

God our beloved country has survived nine difficult years of independence during which women have made significant contributions toward the advancement of Sierra Leone side by side with their counterparts.

As we celebrate another Christmas day let us endeavor to enhance the status of womanhood further and pray that the spirit of Christmas which now pervades the air will prevail among us--the spirit of peace on earth and good will towards men. I wish you all a Merry Christmas.

On another occasion the press was used in protest against a loosely organized group of predominantly Temne women who had gone to pledge their support to the president. This was seen as an act of disloyalty tantamount to forming "a party within a party." Mrs. Steele sent the following statement to the Daily Mail. *

The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women yesterday deplored the attitude of some women who intend to organize on tribal basis. The statement issued after an emergency meeting of Congress yesterday reads:

We, the NCSLW, deplore the attitude of a group of women who intend to organize on tribal basis. The recent delegation to the president composed of a cross-section of Temne women from the western area and the northern province of Sierra Leone must be condemned by all right-thinking Sierra Leoneans who are aware that our root troubles since 1967 were caused through the evil practice of tribalism. The NCSLW see it as an attempt not only to split the women of Sierra Leone but also to undermine the smooth running of the Congress.

We would like to ask these women the following questions:

(a) Why wait until the struggles are over before

*Later recounted at a National Congress meeting.

pledging their loyalty and support?

- (b) Where were the women during the Juxon-Smith* days?
- (c) Where were they when the prime minister and his cabinet were about to be arrested in the State House?
- (d) Where were they on March 21st during the two assassination attempts on the president's life, when the National Congress of Sierra Leone women took their stand by the president and were ready to die at his side if history had so dictated?

The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women calls on these women, these new-found friends of the president and his government, to join hands with them for they are guaranteed by the APC Constitution in Article 15 which states:

APC women's section:

There shall be a women's section which shall be known as the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women and which shall be under the complete control of the central organization.

So we call on these Temne women to join forces with the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women which embraces all tribes to build a better and prosperous Sierra Leone; the National Congress which has fought relentlessly for the achievement of a republic so as to make it possible for them to have the opportunity of pledging their loyalty and support to the president.

Long live the president.

Long live the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women.

*Brigadier A. T. Juxon-Smith was Chairman of the National Reformation Council that ruled the country for thirteen months following a military coup d'etat in March, 1967.

Long live the All People's Congress.

The media of radio and television have also been used by Congress for promoting African nationalism. In one extreme case, a women's radio program was declared too Western or "imperialistic" and taken over by leaders of Congress. The comperes of this program, which was entitled "Kabaslyt en Kotoku"* and broadcast in the Krio language were replaced by Congress women. Mrs. Steele has made guest appearances on this show on several occasions to put forward proposals for a more nationalistic outlook. The new emphasis is on promoting and reflecting African culture in the mass media for entertainment as well as for educational purposes. In one of these programs she called for a revision of the school curriculum to better suit the needs of the country and for a pledge to be made to the Sierra Leone flag in the schools every day. She insists on an African orientation in the schools because "African culture is rich but has been debased."

The white man came to Africa and copied a lot from us and used it in his country, but we look down on our culture. Our children should be taught our own history at school and African languages. They should also learn to play African musical instruments. They must also be taught strict discipline. This country needs discipline.

D. Patronage

Patronage is usually one of the features of parties in power. It is a mechanism used to reward stalwart supporters and to attract new ones. A large proportion of women join Congress in the hope of improving their economic condition or of securing some reward in the form of patronage. More often than not there are not enough favors to be meted out, so top awards such as directorships of corporations are reserved for the cream of the leadership.

A few vacancies for women are sometimes offered to Congress and discussed at the general meeting. Each member lives in the hope that her turn to benefit will soon come around. Once when vacancies

*cf. the British Broadcasting Corporation's radio program "Petticoat Line." The Kabaslyt and Kotoku are traditional dresses.

occurred in the Department of Trade and Industry the news was greeted warmly by members, but only two women could benefit from them. The Organizing Secretary made sure that the two women came from different constituencies to avoid accusations of favoritism.

Choosing delegates to conferences is another area where patronage is apparent. The leaders of Congress make good use of these occasions as opportunities to reward the most active members. It is sometimes alleged that there have been occasions when invitations usually intended for the Federation have been directed to Congress by the Ministry of External Affairs. Consequently it is generally held that some women join Congress for an opportunity to attend conferences and to make visits abroad. In order to ensure impartiality, it is customary to choose one Christian and one Muslim delegate to attend these conferences.

Other benefits of patronage have been in the form of scholarships for children of members, but again these are few and far between. Some women have joined Congress specifically for this purpose but have seldom been able to secure the desired relief from school fees which, because education is not free in Sierra Leone, constitutes a major percentage of the household budget for most families.

In spite of its affiliation with the government, Congress is a poor association. The vast majority of Congress women do not receive any material benefits from the association, and Congress has in fact had to rely on members' subscriptions to implement most of its programs. Apart from the regular subscriptions, members have quite frequently been asked to contribute to one project or another. A number of them regard this as impoverishing and do not feel they have gained any form of patronage on account of their membership. As one woman bitterly put it: "All Congress means to me is money. Every meeting I attend I am asked to pay more money. It is always money from me but nothing from Congress to me. I am a poor trader. Where can I find the money to keep paying these subscriptions and what has Congress done for me? If I am in trouble will the government lift a finger to help me? No!"

II. Discussion

Crucial to an understanding of Congress is an appreciation of its objectives. Contradictory as this may seem from a mass party perspective, centralization has been the main objective of the All People's Congress since it came into power in 1968. This has been necessary partly because of its nationalistic orientation, partly in resistance to opposition, and partly because of its admiration for the seemingly unimpeachable dominance of the government of President Sekou Touré and the Parti Démocratique Guinéen in neighboring Guinea.

The first constitutional step toward centralization in Sierra Leone is through the ballot. Mass parties secure the ballot by appealing to all segments of the population irrespective of sex or ethnic affiliation. Mass parties are the "People's Parties" or, as the first clause of the APC Constitution declares, "the vanguard of the People." Various examples from Africa show that once a mass party succeeds in gaining political power through the ballot, centralization seems inevitable.⁷ In keeping with the trend in the rest of Africa, but particularly in neighboring Guinea, the APC has been pursuing a policy of centralization. The role played by the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women in insuring this move toward centralization has been a significant one and can be summarized as follows.

Recruitment

An important facet of centralization is insuring large-scale recruitment into the party. Consequently, expansion and recruitment have been the primary functions of Congress. At the 1961 convention, a resolution was passed that the Organizing Secretary be given full responsibility to set up new branches in the provinces. By the time of the 1967 convention, the branches had increased from nine to twenty-seven. Some of these branches are in remote areas of the country and only the intensive efforts of recruitment by Congress women could have brought women in these remote areas into the political fold. Women who would otherwise not be greatly motivated politically are encouraged to participate in political activities with members of their own sex. The proliferation of branches of Congress contributes to the creation of horizontal links with the main National Congress which as a result widens the support base of the party.

Watching the Watchdog

Another APC method of ensuring centralization is through the

institution of resident ministers in the provinces. The resident minister is supposed to act as a watchdog in terms of guarding the interest of the party in his area and forestalling any political dissidence. His presence also serves to dissuade the chiefs from using their traditional authority to mobilize support for a rival party.⁸ Congress insures that the ministers remain loyal to the party by encouraging members from its branches in the provinces to come to Freetown for periodic briefings on party affairs in their area. During one general meeting a member from a constituency in the provinces made the following report about the disloyal activities of a resident minister.

Our resident minister is not for the party.
He is a traitor. He is working against the party and causing disturbance in the area.
He supports the opposition party and has now turned members against the APC. He is a dangerous man and must be removed. I have made this trip to Freetown to warn you, my fellow sisters, of this man's danger to our party.

After her report a delegation of fairly prominent and influential women was selected to present a petition to the government calling for the resignation of the minister who was a threat to the security of the party. The government agreed to review the matter and to put the minister under surveillance.

Pressure Group Activities

The role of Congress as a pressure group has been exemplified in the discussion of constitutional action and militancy. With the cooperation of the press, most of Congress' militant demonstrations receive full coverage as acts of "the people." Under this apparent mass support, the government has been able to strengthen its power and introduce constitutional changes and policies that facilitate centralization. In all these moves it can claim to be acting on the demands of "the people," even though it can be argued that there are no clear structural links to justify this claim. On occasions when the demands have been made by Congress and framed in terms of female militancy, the government has acted in order to "placate the women." An example of this has already been seen in the government's response to Mrs. Steele's threat of women declaring a republic.

In addition, Congress in many ways acts as a "safety valve" for

testing public opinion. This is achieved by announcing imminent government policies or constitutional changes and then awaiting public reaction. In some instances, when new policies are likely to meet with opposition, Congress' preemptive move has had an acclimatizing effect on the public which, by the time of the actual constitutional change, becomes manifested in de facto acceptance or apathy.

One-Party Welfare State

The ultimate objective of centralization, so long as it is not done at other parties' expense, is the formation of a one-party state, as the example from many African states shows.⁹ The explicit aim of the APC as stated in the objectives of the Constitution is to be "the vanguard of the people." The objectives implicit in the activities of Congress and in its members' role as political activists for party policies is to make Sierra Leone a one-party state.

Its efforts and successes at ensuring political dominance goes to substantiate Hodgkin's view:

Where a mass party enjoys a position of overwhelming dominance, and conceives of itself as the effective expression of the popular will, from its own standpoint there is nothing undemocratic in the party's enjoying a monopoly of power within the state.¹⁰

One cannot ignore the contribution of opposition parties toward centralization of the APC. Efforts at consolidating the power of the APC have been more successfully implemented during periods of severe opposition. The course of centralization is greatly aided by opposition since it provides justification for utilizing authoritarian methods in an attempt "to institute law and order." In some cases these authoritarian methods do not cease with forestalling or suppressing oppositions but become the policy of the government.

Political models as well as guidance and help have often been sought from countries which have totalitarian regimes. This explains why, in spite of the official international position of nonalignment, the APC has been actively courting the favors of countries of the Eastern bloc. Although its moves toward centralization depend on party organization and on the militancy of Congress, it has also looked toward Communist countries for strategies in implementing an authoritarian structure. The example of Guinea's totalitarianism has been of great

inspiration to the APC and most of the activities of the women in Guinea have been reverently emulated by Congress. Furthermore, contacts are constantly being made with Communist and Socialist countries, and women of Congress have been guests at several conferences in these countries. There is a quantity of pro-Communist propaganda in circulation in the party headquarters; it is common in the party newspaper and it is evident at Congress meetings. Certain Communist practices are emulated, such as the use of the title "comrade" in salutations.

Anti-American slogans have also been adopted and are easily apparent at demonstration and mass rallies.

The effect of this type of propaganda on the general membership of Congress is superficial since the majority of members are uninformed about international relations and do not appreciate these subtle intricacies of the "cold war." With the exception of a handful of members and the leadership, these strategies and propaganda gimmicks remain essentially at the expressive stage. They are of significance in a general way in terms of promoting solidarity rather than in fostering any specific ideology.

There are, however, certain areas in which mass parties and socialism become inseparable. Consequently, the Socialist orientation of the APC propounds an egalitarian philosophy. Under Aims and Objectives, Article 2 Section IV of the APC Constitution states that the party aims

. . . To create a welfare state based upon a Socialist pattern of society in which all citizens regardless of clan, tribe, color, or creed shall have equal opportunity and where there shall be no exploitation of men by man, tribe by tribe, or class by class. To promote suffrage and rule of the majority.

The strategies for the implementation of this welfare state are outlined in the following Clause V:

To achieve the economical and social foundation of a welfare state by stages through means of successive five-year plans.

The "five-year development plan" for Congress which was

primarily embryonic at this stage was outlined in the July, 1971, meeting. Unfortunately, the plan was not dealt with in great detail but covered the following areas:

1. Keep the City Clean campaign
2. A Women's Volunteer Force
3. Nurseries for working mothers
4. A cafeteria to provide hot meals for poor school children
5. A National Congress vocational school
6. A National Congress newspaper

The first two points have received concrete attention, but the others remain matters for discussion and future implementation.

The Keep the City Clean campaign started as an effort to rid the city of some of its filth. Women of Congress were organized into squads, and a rota was drawn up in which each squad covered certain areas of the city. The women were not alone in their endeavors and soon received the cooperation of a few Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and the Department of Sanitation. This move by some women of Congress demonstrated their concern for the welfare of the capital city and earned the admiration of idle onlookers.

The inauguration of the Women's Volunteer Force has already been mentioned. The appearance of women in military uniform was both novel and intriguing to the public. The Force continued to exist, but it has never had to prove its mettle.

The next four points of the "development plan" deal specifically with needs of women, and in this regard could provide a strong basis for female cooperation. Their announcement was greeted with some enthusiasm by the members, but this enthusiasm was tempered by the realization that plans of this nature require funds for their implementation. Various committees were set up to work on different aspects of the "development plan," but the immediate concern was to launch a fundraising drive.

Improving the Status of Women

In many respects, women of Sierra Leone are not unemancipated.*

*I do not believe that it is possible for any human being to

They have the vote, they have equal pay for equal work, and the typical Western housewife is a rarity. A dominant aim is to be self-supporting. The most widespread occupations are trading and farming, but there is hardly any profession into which the Sierra Leone woman has not entered. Those who have excelled in their professions provide the model. Among them is an Appeals Court Judge, Justice Agnes Awooner-Renner. The head of the medical services in Sierra Leone is a woman, Dr. Marcella Davies. Sierra Leone has the only woman director of a World Bank project, Mrs. Murietta Olu-Williams, a former Ministerial Permanent Secretary. Female Chiefs and Paramount Chiefs with executive powers in their domains are not unusual, and one, Madam Honoria Bailor-Caulker, is a member of parliament. The Sierra Leone ambassador to Ethiopia is a woman, Her Excellency Mrs. Shirley Gbujama. Freetown has had a female mayor, Mrs. Constance Cummings-John, and the present deputy town clerk is a woman.¹¹ The master and registrar of courts is a woman. There are outstanding female artists, university professors, journalists, broadcasters, architects, accountants, directors of companies, several barristers, and one forensic expert.

When women of Congress speak of improving the status of women, improvement is seen in political terms rather than in terms of advancement in the professions or even in terms of legal reforms. The reason for this is based on their very pragmatic approach to life. First, they realize that the only serious barriers to female education* in Sierra Leone are motivation and financial limitations, not sex discrimination. Second, with regard to the law, women know from experience that the existence of a law does not guarantee its implementation. This is due to a number of reasons, which the following explains briefly. In the existence of two systems of law in Sierra Leone--customary law and statutory law--there is a tendency for each to "ignore" the other and for barristers to become rich through having the opportunity to manipulate both. Furthermore, the law does not offer protection in all areas of human relationships, so women may come to feel that, even though there are laws for their general protection, they have no legal protection in what they actually experience as "injustice."

Legal reforms in themselves do not guarantee women a higher

achieve "emancipation" because of the extent to which the influence of multinational corporations, the constraints of ideologies, and the sheer weight of political machinery defines the boundaries of individual choice.

*Education for anyone--male or female--can be regarded as a luxury in Sierra Leone.

status, they serve only to nullify a previous condition of discrimination. In other words, they restore a condition of which women have been stripped, i. e., equality.¹²

Women of Congress, therefore, go one stage further by seeking to be part of the law-making body in significant enough numbers to have an appreciable effect as decision makers. Apart from its political and national objectives, many members of Congress believe that women have a political role to play in the development of the country. In reply to questions about why they have joined Congress, the answers are often specifically framed in terms of improving women's social status or helping the country progress. These two views are inseparable. Women's social elevation is seen as being contingent upon their political participation in the decision-making process: "Women are needed to help the country progress and this is the reason why we have joined Congress. We want to help the country go forward."

Mrs. Steele, in particular, is more specific. She feels women should play a convincing role in the decision-making process and in legislation.

Women should participate in all facets of administration, in committees, on boards as directors, in parliament, and in the government. Many issues of the country concern women and children, so we should be consulted and we should make decisions. We do not want to be subordinate to the men in government. This is why Congress is an independent body. We can even oppose the government. You should see us challenge the government! Other women's political associations made the mistake of being subordinate to the government. We are independent and run our own affairs. We know what we want and we go and get it.

Although there are no women cabinet ministers, it is clear that Congress' role in activating the party machinery has contributed to the maintenance of much of its mass structure and indeed to its survival. Congress has been vigorously recruiting new members and mobilizing women. It has ensured the continuity of support for the APC by keeping political interests alive, and by keeping the fire burning and the APC flag flying not only at election time but also throughout its term of office.

Programs of special interest to women have been included with the aim of maintaining their support. By providing facilities and activities of interest to a wide range of women, Congress hopes to mobilize them into a central pool. The special relation of politics to women is usually stated as an effort to improve women's status and insure female participation in the political affairs of the country. The aim of Congress in relation to women is always given by the leadership as one of improvement.

To improve the condition of women and to encourage the public participation of women not so much for the political advancement of the party as for the social advancement of women.

-Assistant Secretary,
Working Committee

It is important for women to involve themselves in the affairs of the country. If women organize themselves, they are capable of running the country.

-Secretary

The political events which have caused much unrest tend to give this objective greater emphasis as women feel that political instability threatens their security. Mrs. Steele often warns: "If this country is ruined, women will suffer most."

Freetown women on the whole have a strong sense of independence and are resilient in response to pressure, a characteristic often reflected in autonomy and militancy of Congress. This sense of independence is what gives them the confidence to run their own affairs and to seek to improve women's participation in politics and decision-making bodies. The leadership is firmly convinced that given a chance women could run the country more efficiently than men.

If women were in power there will be no political unrest and instability. Women act on impulse and would have to put an end to all this unrest at one go. Women have tougher minds.

-Secretary

Mrs. Steele is convinced that women are indispensable in all spheres of life: "Unless women have a hand in a thing, it will fail."

Postscript

The Political Demise of Nancy Steele

Much of the dynamism of Congress is sustained through the energy, resources, and political skills of the Organizing Secretary, Mrs. Nancy Steele. Like all politicians, Mrs. Steele has ambitions of attaining high political office. She works hard for the party and is responsible for much of the mobilization of women to the party. Her efforts do not cease after elections but continue to ensure that the support base of the party is enlarged. Congress provides her with a means of mobilizing women, but in addition it also provides her with a platform to assert her political stature. This she achieves through speeches, rallies, conventions, and inauguration of branches throughout the country. The backing of Congress provides her with enough support to attain her political goal, which is a seat in parliament and, if possible, a ministry.

There were all indications that at the last general election Mrs. Steele would gain a seat and a ministry. She seemed to possess the requirements for political office. Her experience of political organization dates back to her student days in England. Her role in building up the APC and in inaugurating and sustaining Congress is widely known and credited. She has held political office in the City Council as councillor and as alderman. She had the support of Congress, which at this stage was a springboard for her attainment of political office.

The elections were scheduled for May, 1973. They were held in a climate of political tension and in all but five seats the APC was unopposed. Mrs. Steele, once regarded as a dead certainty on the ticket, was not given a party symbol. She stood as an independent candidate and lost. Those who saw her work and sacrifice her time and resources for the party were disappointed. I received the following letter from Freetown* a few days after the elections.

Mrs. Steele was not given a ticket for the party. We cannot understand why. Poor woman, after all the work she did for the party. It must be because she is a woman.

My impression is that she was left out, not because she was a woman,

*By the time of the elections, I had returned to Oxford.

but because she was becoming increasingly powerful and was expressing this power in an overtly militant way. Revolutionaries thrive better in countries that are not basically reactionary.*

*A "structural analysis" of the political demise of Mrs. Steele will be given in another publication.

APPENDIX A

Committees

The Resolutions Committee was set up to receive draft resolutions from the various branches. These had to be sent in a fortnight in advance.

The Credentials Committee was responsible for managing the presentation of credentials from delegates, and the chairman of this committee, by virtue of her high status as City Councillor, was assigned the task of receiving these credentials.

The Wallace-Johnson Bust Committee was set up to be in charge of raising funds for the erection of a bust to honor the memory of Mr. Wallace-Johnson, one of the founders of Congress.

The National Beneficial Committee was to act as a complaints department. All types of grievances about economic conditions, the cost of living, and general welfare were to be entertained by this committee and reports were to be made at the Convention.

The Accommodation Committee was responsible for lodging the delegates from out of town.

The main function of the Dance Committee was to plan for the Grand Convention Dance, which was to be the grand finale.

APPENDIX B

General Resolutions Passed at the Second Convention of National Congress of Sierra Leone Women

We the participants of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women at the Second National Convention, here gathered, at the Town Hall, Freetown, from 7-10 October, 1970:

Having carefully discussed the various reports represented, we approve the (political line) and (activities) implemented by the National Executive of the Congress in the period between the First and Second National Conventions. In this period, the participation of the rising young generation of women has become wider and more combative in the popular struggle for national independence, national unity, justice, self-determination, and freedom; peaceful co-existence between countries with different social systems for democracy and progress, against local detractors, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism.

We express our avowed satisfaction at the broadening of cooperation with all branches of the Congress--both old and new--and we appreciate the entry into the Congress of new dynamic women and forces which share equality, the concrete program of the NCSLW.

We believe that these fruitful results are mainly due to the thoughtful program of the correct political line of the parent body of the All People's Congress under the wise, able, the most respected and beloved leadership of Comrade Dr. Siaka Stevens.

We consider the present international situation imposes many new and urgent tasks on the women of Sierra Leone in the framework of the common struggle of the world for the safe-guarding of peace and the advancement of mankind.

We denounce the imperialists, in particular those of the United States of America, as being mainly responsible for the growing aggravation of the international situation and the threat of war which today hangs over the whole mankind.

We strongly appeal to all women, young and old, to cooperate more fully and strengthen the struggle for world peace and democracy.

We renounce all imperialist intrigues and call for the intensification of the genuine efforts of all women for:

(a) An end to the aggression of the U.S. imperialism against Cuba, as well as to its political, economic and military interference in the life of all revolutionary Latin-American peoples led by militant Comrade Fidel Castro.

(b) An immediate cessation of the imperialist policy by aggression pursued by the U.S., Britain, West Germany, and France all over the African and Asian continents, by means of SEATO, NATO and CENTO military pacts; the occupation of the Japanese territory of Okinawa, of South Korea, South Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Chinese island of Taiwan. In particular, we lend our unequivocal support for the restoration of a People's Republic of China into the United Nations and call upon both the Sierra Leone Government and the APC and all governments of the world to recognize without delay the establishment of diplomatic relations on reciprocal basis.

(c) We appeal to all Sierra Leone Women and all progressive women the world over to continue to fight vigorously for the complete abolition of all colonial systems in all its forms and manifestations, while expressing our solidarity in particular with the patriotic peoples of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and the so-called Portuguese Guinea who are struggling for their national independence and freedom.

(d) We pledge our unflinching support with all peoples fighting against racial segregation apartheid, especially in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, and demand the unconditional and immediate release of the wife of the South African Nationalist Leader, Madam Mandela, together with all freedom fighters now incarcerated in the various prisons and detentions.

(e) Realizing that the struggle against the power of the monopolies and racism is an important aspect, we call upon all branches of the Congress to consider as essential the urgent task for the development of cooperative relations and united action among all sectors of which it is composed and which desire to contribute toward the gaining of a better future for the rising generation and toward the continued progress of freedom, democracy, and peace.

(f) We pledge to continue to develop our policy of unity, oneness and cooperation with all progressive women forces, both

in Sierra Leone and abroad, and in addition, with all international organizations genuinely devoted to promote the interest of womanhood.

(g) Finally, the NCSLW calls for an immediate solution to the German problem, the conclusion of a German Peace Treaty with the two German Democratic Republics by all progressive governments of the world, with the establishment of diplomatic relations at equal basis.

Notes

1. For a detailed study of Wallace-Johnson's contribution to the development of African nationalism, see Spitzer, L. and Denzer, L., "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League," in The International Journal of African Historical Studies, Vol. VI, 1973, pp. 413-452 and 565-601.
2. Vide Kilson, M., Political Change in a West African State for an analysis of political change in Sierra Leone from Colonial to post-independence times.
3. Vide Cartwright, J.R., Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-1967, pp. 239-255.
4. For studies of religious groups in Freetown, see Fashole-Luke, E., "Religion in Freetown," in Fyfe and Jones (eds.), Freetown: A Symposium, 1968.
5. There are fifteen ethnic groups in Sierra Leone and, as elsewhere, ethnic conflicts are not uncommon. For analyses of ethnicity in Africa, see Wallerstein, I., "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa," Cahier d'Etudes Africaines, No. 3, 1960, pp. 129-139, and Bates, R.H., "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa," in Comparative Political Studies, January 1974, Vol. 6, No. 4.
6. Hodgkin, T., African Political Parties, 1961, p. 133.
7. Hodgkin, T., African Political Parties. Also Carter, G., African One-Party States, Wallerstein, I., "The Political Role of Voluntary Associations in Middle Africa," and Zolberg, A. R., Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa.
8. Kilson, M., Political Change in a West African State, points out the importance of chiefs as political allies for the SLPP. Much of SLPP support was derived from reciprocal relationships with the chiefs.
9. This is not the first attempt to form a one-party state in Sierra Leone. The SLPP attempted to do so in 1965 when it was in power, but was unsuccessful in this move. Vide Cartwright, J. R., Politics in Sierra Leone, pp. 210-238, for a discussion of this move. It will be noted that the APC at that time opposed the idea of a one-party state. But is it not the prerogative of politicians to change their minds?

10. Hodgkin, T., African Political Parties, p. 163.

11. Vide Timothy, B., "Sierra Leone's Women in the Lead," West Africa, April 4, 1975, pp. 419-421. Also Steady, F.C., "The Structure and Function of Women's Voluntary Associations in an African City: A Study of the Associative Process among Women in Freetown," (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1973).

12. Needless to say, profound theses on the imposed inequality of women have been given by several writers. Among the best known are Mead, M., Male and Female; de Beauvoir, S., The Second Sex; and Greer, G., The Female Eunuch.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bates, R. H. "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa," Comparative Political Studies, January 1974, Vol. 6, No. 4, Sage Publications, Inc., 1974.
- Carter, G. African One-Party States, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Cartwright, J. R. Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-1967, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- de Beauvoir, S. The Second Sex, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley, London: The New English Library (Four Square Edition), 1960.
- Fashole-Luke, E., "Religion in Freetown," Fyfe, C. and Jones, E.D. (eds.), Freetown: A Symposium, Freetown: University of Sierra Leone Press, 1968.
- Greer, G. The Female Eunuch, London: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1971.
- Hodgkin, T. African Political Parties, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961.
- Kilson, M. Political Change in a West African State, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Mead, M. Male and Female, London: Victor Gollancz, 1949.
- Sierra Leone Daily Mail
12 October 1970
15 October 1970
16 October 1970
22 December 1970
30 June 1971
- Spitzer, L. and Denzer, L. "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League," International Journal of African Historical Studies, Vol. VI, 1973.

Steady, F. C. "The Structure and Function of Women's Voluntary Associations in an African City: A Study of the Associative Process among Women in Freetown," unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University, 1973.

Timothy, B. "Sierra Leone's Women in the Lead," West Africa, 4 April 1975.

Unity (Freetown, Sierra Leone)
15 October 1970

Wallerstein, I. "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa," Cahier d'Etudes Africaines, No. 3, 1960.

_____. "The Political Role of Voluntary Associations in Middle Africa," in J.S. Coleman and C. Rosberg (eds.) Political Groups in Middle Africa, 1963.

West Africa
4 April 1971

Zolberg, A. R. Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa, Chicago, Illinois: Rand McNally & Co., 1966.

Volume I / 1970-71

- 1 A Black Mauritian Poet Speaks
Edouard Maunick \$1
- 2 South Africa: Three Visitors Report
George Kennan, Leon Gordenker, Wilton Dillon \$2
- 3 Choiseul Papers. Unpublished ms 1761 on secret
British and French machinations in West Africa \$4
- 4 How Black South African Visitors View the U.S.
E. S. Munger \$1
- 5 Current Politics in Ghana
John Fynn, M.P. \$1
- 6 Walking 300 Miles with Guerillas Through the Bush
of Eastern Angola (Map)
Basil Davidson \$2

Volume II / 1971-72

- 7 An Exploration Near Agades and Timbuktu In Advance
of the 1973 Total Solar Eclipse
Jay M. Pasachoff \$2
- 8 A Brown Afrikaner Speaks: A Coloured Poet and
Philosopher Looks Ahead \$1
Adam Small
- 9 Dialogue on Aggression and Violence in Man \$3
Louis Leakey, Robert Ardrey
- 10 The Past and Future of the Zulu People \$1
Gatsha Buthelezi
- 11 The Anya-nya: Ten Months Travel with Its Forces
Inside the Southern Sudan (Map) \$2
Allan Reed
- 12 "Dear Franklin . . ." Letters to President Roosevelt
from Lincoln MacVeagh, U.S. Minister to South Africa,
1942-43 \$3
Comment by John Seiler

Volume III / 1972-73

- 13 Eritrean Liberation Front: A Close-Up View \$1
(Map, Photographs)
Richard Lobban
- 14 The Uganda Coup and the Internationalization of
Political Violence \$2
James Mittelman
- 15 Sierra Leone Notebook (1893) Revealing important
deletions from official despatches of Governor Francis
Fleming (Map) \$3
Comment by Kenneth Mills
- 16 Blood Group Frequencies: An Indication of the
Genetic Constitution of Population Samples in Cape Town \$3
M. C. Botha, M.D., with Judith Pritchard
Comment by R. D. Owen
- 17 The Ovambo: Our Problems and Hopes \$2
(Illustration, Maps)
Bishop Leonard N. Auala of Southwest Africa/Namibia
- 18 Inside Amin's Uganda: More Africans Murdered \$1

Volume IV / 1973-74

- 19 Report on Portugal's War in Guiné-Bissau
(206 pages; 27 photos, maps)
Also available in hard cover
Al J. Venter
- 20 Will BophuthaTswana Join Botswana?
(photographs, maps)
Chief Minister Lukas Mangope
- 21 Demographic Trends in the Republic of Zaire
Professor Joseph Boute
- 22 South Africa's Homelands: Two African Views
*Chief Minister Cedric Phatudi of
Lebowa and Chief Clemens Kapuuo
of South West Africa/Namibia*
- 23 Pragmatism and Idealism in Brazilian
Foreign Policy in Southern Africa
Professor Roy Glasgow
- 24 In Search of Man: Some Questions
and Answers in African Archaeology
and Primatology
*Campbell, Clark, Dart, Fossey,
Hamburg, Hay, Howell, Isaac, M. Leakey,
Van Lawick-Goodall*

Volume V / 1974-75

- 25 The Role of Kiswahili on the Development of Tanzania
George Mhina
- 26 The Afrikaner as Seen Abroad
Edwin S. Munger
- 27 Equatorial Guinea: Machinations in Founding a
National Bank
Robert C. Gard
- 28 The Founding of the African Peoples Organization in
Cape Town in 1903 and the Role of Dr. Abdurahman
Dr. Richard van der Ross
- 29 South African Political Ephemera: Pamphlets, Broad-sides,
Serials, and Manuscripts in the Munger Africana
Library (42 illustrations)
Charlene M. Baldwin

Volume VI / 1975-76

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 30 | Leadership Transition in Black Africa: Elite Generations and Political Succession. 14 tables, 67p.
<i>Professor Victor T. Le Vine</i> | \$3 |
| 31 | Female Power in African Politics: The National Congress of Sierra Leone. Photographs. 90p.
<i>Dr. Filomina Steady</i>
<i>In Preparation:</i> | \$4 |
| 32 | Machel's Marxist Mozambique: A First-Hand Report. About 28 photographs, map, about 70p.
<i>Robin Wright</i> | \$4 |
| 33 | David Livingstone's Letters to John Washington. Photographs, map, about 80p.
<i>Edited by Gary Clendennen</i> | \$4 |
| 34 | Bibliography of Books and Key Articles on Africa Published in Poland (in Polish, English, etc.) Since 1960, with a note on African studies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. About 60p. | \$3 |

Also published by the Munger Africana Library

The Hunter and His Art
A Survey of Rock Art in Southern Africa

by Jalmar and Ione Rudner

60 color-plates - maps - diagrams
10x11½ inches - 288 pages

\$32 plus 85¢ for postage and handling

Index to Issues #1-29

Sent free to subscribers of Issues 1-29.

Available to others at \$1.00 per copy.

The Munger Africana Library is housed in the Donald E. Baxter, M.D., Hall of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California.

It is devoted solely to Africa south of the Sahara, and includes over 20,000 books and pamphlets. The greatest strength of the collection lies in its rare books and political pamphlets.

Serious research scholars are invited to use the library, and working facilities are provided on request. The library is non-circulating.